

# IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY'S EXPERIENCES WITH CENTERIFUGAL AND CENTRIPETAL FORCES: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY'S EXPERIENCES WITH CENTRIFUGAL AND CENTRIPETAL FORCES: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS, by MAJ Jonathan E. Schrader, 91 pages

This thesis examines how the Iroquois Confederacy dealt with the centrifugal and centripetal forces it experienced in its over 300 year existence. Chapter 1 outlines an overall introduction to the subject. It also shows how important both centrifugal and centripetal forces were in influencing the Confederacy's Center of Gravity (CoG). Chapter 2 tells how both centrifugal and centripetal forces worked within the Confederacy prior to the end of the French and Indian War (1763). Prior to 1763, centripetal forces acted as the dominant forces. Chapter 3 describes the changes that occurred between the two forces after 1763. Chapter 4 provides conclusions that explain the changes in dominance between the two forces.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As one of the most powerful Native American political-governmental organizations, the Iroquois Confederacy played a dominant role in northeastern North American affairs. From the early 1600s to 1779, France, Britain and the Netherlands understood that they had to deal with this powerful governmental body in order to attain their ambitions in North America. During this time, these nations dealt with the Confederacy through all forms of national power, such as diplomatic, informational, economic, and militarily (DIME). At its height, the Confederacy came to dominate its neighbors from their lands hundreds of miles away. The Iroquois also controlled the fur trade, which became more evident after the Beaver Wars in the early 1600s.<sup>1</sup>

From their position of power, the Iroquois obtained much support in material and influence from their backing by various European powers. They also controlled a key geographical position, located in present day central to western New York State. This area served as the key land thoroughfare that led into the heart of North America, which opened up greater opportunities for trade. The European powers recognized the value of this central location, but could not control the area. This Iroquoian prominence occurred because of the forces that shaped its successful results. Unfortunately for the Iroquois these forces started to unravel around the year 1763, which contributed to its overall vulnerability. These forces that changed entailed both internal and external forces. Some of the internal forces included: balance of power within the League; less importance stressed over unanimous decisions; and a more openness to Christianity. This contributed



to greater factionalism within the Confederacy, which weakened the society. The change of external forces involved a more competent group of emissaries who knew the Iroquois culture and language. This contributed to greater influence of the League by the Europeans and the Americans. This vulnerability led to the end of the Confederacy in 1779 during the American Revolution.

For most of its existence, many outside nations viewed the Iroquois Confederation as an invincible and monolithic state. This view was not necessarily correct. In fact the foundation of the Iroquois Confederacy grew out of a desire of competing independent, but culturally similar tribes yearning for security against larger foreign nations. After the founding of the Confederacy, the original five (later six) tribes still continued to pursue varying interests that at times might not have benefited the Confederacy as a whole. However, the Confederacy kept itself from falling apart for approximately 300 years.

The Iroquois Confederacy was a political body-alliance of six semiindependent nations, which went by a variety of names. Some of these names include: the League of the Six Nations; the League of the Great Peace; the Iroquois Confederacy; or the Iroquois Confederation. In Iroquoian, the League called itself Ganonsyoni, which translated means the “lodge that is spread out far” or longhouse (see figure 1).<sup>2</sup> To the Iroquois, the longhouse served a valuable purpose of security and community for the family members who resided there. These individual tribes acted as one family who lived under one longhouse comprising the entire lands of the Confederacy. This longhouse represented the geographical expression for their lands. This longhouse of the Confederacy sheltered the five, and later six tribes or nations in one powerful alliance. From east to west of this

metaphorical longhouse, these five original tribes comprised: the Mohawks, the Oneida, the Onondaga, the Cayuga, and the Seneca.

In 1715 the Tuscarora nation joined the Confederacy as the sixth nation. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the Tuscarora Tribe, originally from New York, settled in present day North Carolina. They were an Iroquois tribe whose language bore close similarities to the Oneida Nation. After their defeat during their war against the English colonists over the theft of their lands in North Carolina, approximately 1,500 to 2,000 Tuscaroras settled in the lands of the Oneidas.<sup>3</sup>

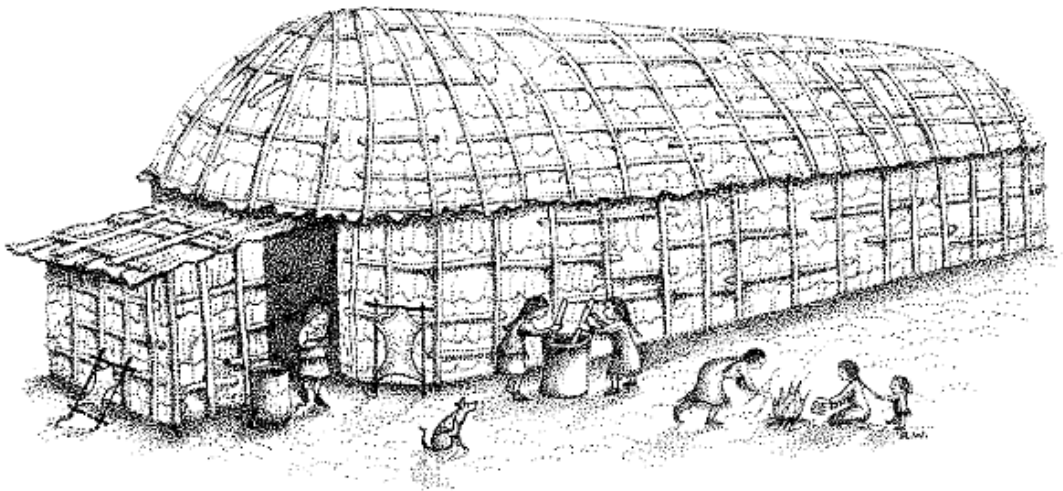


Figure 1. The Iroquois Longhouse

NOTE: It also served as a metaphor outlining the geographical and familial relationship the five nations had with each other.

Source: Taken from the New York State Museum Website; available from <http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/IroquoisVillage/constructionone.html>.

Every society has forces within it that can either bind it together or tear it apart. The centripetal (integrative) and centrifugal (dispersive) forces act as the influences that

ultimately determine the path a nation or state decides to select. These forces can arise internally or externally, but it is the effect that causes the society to respond. Throughout the histories of many countries, both centripetal and centrifugal forces occurred simultaneously. As they continue to act at the same time, eventually one side gains in dominance. When that happens, the nation will sooner or later experience the outcome. These forces can determine whether a nation will either gain power or break apart. An example of some of these forces includes religion, economics, politics, and race. Some of these forces contributed to the Confederacy's primary center of gravity (CoG). A good definition for a CoG comes from the US and NATO definition as: "Those characteristics, capabilities, or localities from which a nation, an alliance, military force or other grouping derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight."<sup>4</sup> The Iroquois people's primary CoG centered on its national identity and purpose manifested through the Confederacy itself.

Throughout their history, the Iroquois experienced both centrifugal and centripetal forces. Originally centripetal forces dominated allowing the Confederacy to gain in power. Later with increased exposure to Europeans, centrifugal forces rose to dominance propelling the Confederacy to dissolution.

The period of Iroquois history that involved the primacy of centripetal forces covers the years from the founding of the Confederacy to the end of the French and Indian War in 1763. In this period centripetal forces dominated. These forces included: threats from its neighbors; its culture; and its diplomatic, economical and geographical relationships with European powers.

This period of time focused on the various wars between rival tribes and the French who sought to protect their interests by protecting their native allies. Approximately 100 to 200 years before the arrival of the Europeans, the Iroquois united to fight their common enemies. The unity of the Confederacy focused all of the five original tribes' resources, which provided a unity of effort that ultimately led to their victories over many of their enemies. Threat from its neighbors, formed the initial critical requirements that along with the nation's critical capabilities, (its people) strengthened its CoG (see figure 2). The Iroquois culture possessed facets that seemed extremely foreign to the newly arrived Europeans. Of its unique aspects, the key Iroquoian cultural facets comprised of complex leadership hierarchies; a decentralized form of government; concepts of unanimity and reciprocity; and its unique religion. These cultural facets served as other critical capabilities that contributed to the CoG in holding the Confederacy together.

Prior to 1763 the focus primarily concentrated on the first exposure the Iroquois received concerning European culture, trade and diplomacy. As influence reached the lands of Iroquoia, its protective culture exerted itself as a defense. The results led to some disruption on all levels of its society, but it strengthened the resolve of its people to remain united. Centrifugal forces also affected the Confederacy during this time. Some examples included competing interests of individual clans and tribes (factionalism) and the increased deaths of their own people due to disease and constant warfare spurred on by European arrival. Even though centrifugal forces were present, the centripetal forces carried the day.



Figure 2. The Iroquois Confederacy, Located in Present Day New York State  
 NOTE: Prior to the founding of the Confederation, the original five nations bonded together to form a united alliance to defend itself against its neighbors.  
 Source: Taken from Within the Vines Website; available from <http://www.cynthiaswope.com/withinthevines/penna/native/iroquois.html>.

The second period covers the years after the French defeat during the French and Indian War (1763) to the end of the Iroquois Confederacy (1779). During this period, the balance of forces changed over to the centrifugal side. Some factors that could be identified as centripetal prior to 1763 started to change and acted more centrifugal. The centrifugal forces that dominated the outcome of the Confederacy at this time included: changes in the culture; changes in its acceptance to religion; changes in the diplomatic, economical and geographical relationships with Europe and its colonists.

Many of the changes that led to the overall and permanent split in the Confederacy through centrifugal forces came as a result to the actions caused prior to 1763. Resulting from the ravages of many years of war, aspects of the Iroquois culture changed. One of the most important aspects that changed involved the governing capabilities within the Confederacy. Resulting from the many deaths due to disease and war, the number of capable hereditary civil chiefs (sachems) decreased. This lack of capable sachems weakened this group whose main purpose involved maintaining the peace within the Confederacy. With this vacuum, many other groups gained in influence, such as the lesser chiefs. A lesser chief usually obtained his title due to his skills as either a warrior or an orator. As a whole, the Confederacy lost the effectiveness of the sachem, in maintaining internal peace. The change within the Iroquoian leadership also assisted in lessening the importance of unanimous decisions. These two changes also contributed to the increase in the influence the British and their colonial subordinates had over the Iroquois.

Another change involved the growing interest the colonists had with owning Iroquoian lands. In the seventeenth century the Europeans and their colonists had developed an extensive fur trade. With the desire that Europe had for furs, both the Iroquois and the New Yorkers achieved great economic success. In exchange for the furs, the Europeans provided the Iroquois manufactured goods (i.e. metal tools, firearms, textiles and even alcohol). In time these goods changed from nice to have luxury goods to required items needed for daily life. When the fur trade decreased in relevance due to the depopulation of fur bearing animals, the Iroquois had little to trade with the colonists. Land became the valued commodity. Through the colonial attempts to acquire Indian

land, friction developed between the Iroquois, and primarily its most eastern nation, the Mohawks. Many hard feelings on the side of the Mohawks developed over the loss of land and the intrusion of the colonists and their cattle.

Another change concentrated on the increased geographical proximity of both the British and the colonists to the Iroquois. During the French and Indian War (1757-1763) both Britain and France constructed forts within Iroquoia to influence the Iroquois. After 1759, the British took the former French garrison of Fort Niagara by siege, located in Seneca country. This centralized British military control throughout the lands of the Iroquois. The American settlers ventured closer to Mohawk and later Oneida countries. The distance that the majority of the Confederacy enjoyed disappeared after 1763. As these changes continued, the centripetal forces changed to centrifugal forces. These centrifugal forces worked against the unity of this group of nations and ultimately tore it apart.

The American Revolution served as the final catalyst that broke this alliance. When pressure came from both Britain and America for support, the Confederacy ceased to exist in its original form. Nations went off to support both sides, while others tried to stay neutral. At various periods of the Revolution, some Iroquois ended up fighting against each other. One of the most violent of these engagements involved the Battle of Oriskany (August 6, 1777), near the Oneida village of Oriska (see figure 3). During this battle Oneida warriors joined with American militia to fight a joint British and Seneca-Cayuga invasion into New York. After the battle, both Oneida and the Seneca-Cayuga lost a significant number of warriors. This loss caused a growing enmity amongst the tribes. There were many reprisals on both sides, but the most violent of which involved

the American General Sullivan's invasion into Iroquoia. The purpose of this invasion focused on knocking the Iroquois out of their support to the British, either by engagement or scorched earth. His campaign led to the destruction of many villages. Many of the Mohawk, Cayuga, and Onondaga tribes fled west to the British held Fort Niagara for refuge. At the end of the war the product of these forces permanently splintered the Confederation.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 3. Painting Entitled The Oneidas at the Battle of Oriskany - August 6, 1777  
NOTE: It represented the commitment that the Oneida Nation had in support of the American colonists.

*Source:* Taken from the National Firearms Museum Website; available from <http://www.nationalfirearmsmuseum.org/whats%20new/default.asp>.

After the French and Indian War, the Confederacy experienced the significant changes that switched the balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces. For the most part, these two forces acted simultaneously through both periods. The changes that occurred were so slight during the first period that they went unnoticed until the 1760s.



These changes in the end severely affected the League's ability to remain unified. As these changes occurred, its internal critical capabilities became more unable to adapt in defending itself against the centrifugal forces.

The factors that increased the severity of these changes came from the external forces the League experienced through its interaction with the European powers. These changes arose from the pressures and encounters, which came from the joint British and colonial influences. After 1763 both the British and Americans changed in various ways in dealing with the Iroquois. These changes included: different economical requirements; politics; closer proximities to the Iroquois; and improved capabilities in conducting the Iroquoian style of forest diplomacy.

Both internally and externally, these factors ultimately contributed to the weakening of the Confederacy's CoG, the national identity. The internal factors that stem from Iroquoian culture contributed to the growing fractures within the League caused by factions within the Confederacy. The external factors also contributed to this greater divisiveness through an increasingly competent group of emissaries that had greater influence on the Iroquois people and its leaders. With the loss of their national identity, the Six Nations lost the will to maintain the peace within the Confederacy. The resultant break up of the Confederacy did not occur neatly. As the Grand Council ceased to exist at their capital in Onondaga, the tribes lost their national unity. Another problem also involved the increased factionalism within the tribes, which caused some divisions within the tribes. Some of these divisions carry on to this day.

Because of the Revolution, all six nations officially lost their sovereignty. Many of the Iroquois that either sided with the British or remained neutral lost the majority of

their land over a period of ten years after the conclusion of hostilities. Many of them fled to British held Canada. Even the Oneidas and Tuscaroras lost a significant amount of their territory to the encroaching farmers and speculators of the new republic.

Prior to 1763, the Iroquois experienced a majority of centripetal forces that strengthened the CoG of the Confederacy. The Iroquois culture proved to be a reservoir of strength that contributed to the national identity. During this period the European representatives did not have the competencies that could manipulate the League. These powers could not effectively use all of their elements of national power. Of the elements available to them, they mainly tended to rely on their military along with their economic power through trade with goods desired by the Iroquois. The inability of these nations to consistently employ competent ambassadors kept them from effectively using their diplomatic and informational elements of national power. As long as these representatives did not take into account the culture and language of the Iroquois, they did not have any lasting affect in influencing the entire Confederacy. Since the Europeans could not directly influence the entire League at that time, the Iroquois maintained its sovereignty.

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<sup>1</sup>The Beaver Wars (1640-1701) entailed a series of wars between the Iroquois and the French and their native allies. The wars began as a way for the Iroquois to expand their control over the fur trade in the west. After many losses on both sides, a peace treaty was signed in 1701 by the Iroquois, the French, and the British. Even though the Iroquois made gains, the treaty required the Iroquois to stop its movements west.

<sup>2</sup>Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 13.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 239.

<sup>4</sup>Dr. Joe Strange and COL Richard Iron, “Understanding Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities,” in *US Army Command and General Staff College C150 Book of Readings* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: USACGSC, June 2006), 111.

<sup>5</sup>Barbara Graymont, “The Six Nations Indians in the Revolutionary War,” in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, ed. Francis Jennings, William N. Fenton, Mary A. Druke, and David R. Miller (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 11.

## CHAPTER 2

### CENTRIFUGAL AND CENTRIPETAL FORCES IN IROQUOIA PRIOR TO 1763

Before 1763 the Iroquois steadily grew in power and influence throughout the entire northeast. Both centrifugal and centripetal forces influenced the direction and influence of the Confederacy. Some of the centrifugal forces that the Confederacy experienced included: factionalism from clan to Great Council echelons and massive depopulation resulting from diseases and more violent wars. During this period the Iroquois faced the following centripetal forces: threats from its neighbors; its culture; and its diplomatic, economical and geographical relationships with European powers. While both forces greatly influenced Iroquois society, the centripetal forces that prevailed prior to the year 1763. Some of the internal cultural centripetal forces also served as key critical requirements that strengthened the League's center of gravity (CoG). Resulting from these forces the Iroquois maintained their independence from European powers and dominated many other native tribes.

Prior to the Confederation's founding, the Iroquois existed as a disunited collection of tribes sharing only a common language and culture. During this time the tribes experienced a gradual alienation between each other due to their own competing interests. From these competing interests, the original five nations fought many wars among each other, which severely weakened each tribe. As a result of their weakness, the individual tribes could not fight off the various attacks and incursions of their neighbors. The five disunited nations lost these wars regularly to their neighbors. One such neighbor that dominated the Iroquois included the Adirondacks who were an Algonquin speaking

tribe that ruled the land north of the St Lawrence River. Resulting from these wars and conflicts, many people within the five nations strongly desired peace among tribes with a common language and culture. The goal behind this peace was to establish a greater security in defense against its neighbors.<sup>1</sup> This desire acted as the key centripetal force essential in uniting the five tribes.

The exact date of the founding of the Iroquois Confederacy cannot be accurately ascertained due to the lack of direct evidence available. Some scholars estimate that the founding of the League of the Great Peace occurred sometime within the fifteenth century. This period was determined on by the “archaeological evidence of economic exchanges within Iroquoia and a homogenization of material culture among the five previously isolated nations.”<sup>2</sup>

What remains of the history of the founding of the League can be based on the legend of Deganawida and Hiawatha. Based on the legend, the most important reason for the birth of the Confederation was the desire for peace among the five warring tribes and defense against hostile outsiders. In this legend, Deganawida was a Huron who was later adopted by the Mohawks and made a chief. Hiawatha was a chief of the Onondagas who tried to establish a peace among his tribe, dominated by the great war chief Atotarho. Atotarho was the most powerful Onondaga chief who kept his tribe at war with his neighbors and eventually subdued both the Senecas and the Cayugas.<sup>3</sup> Hiawatha was in despair of the constant destruction and killing committed by his own tribe since the most of the feuding among the five tribes was attributed to Atotarho. He tried several attempts within his own tribe to call for a “permanent government” among the five tribes, but Atotarho and his supporters intimidated anyone who agreed to Hiawatha’s plan.

Eventually Hiawatha left the Onondaga and traveled to the Iroquois' most eastern tribe, the Mohawks, where he met Deganawida.<sup>4</sup>

Both Deganawida and Hiawatha worked together to develop "laws for the Great Peace whose purpose would be to do away war, death, and robbery between brothers and bring peace, quietness, and brotherhood to mankind." Prior to their meeting with Atotarho, the two men sent word to the chiefs of the other tribes in order to obtain their views of peace. Nearly all of the five tribes supported the two chiefs. After all tribes consented to the peace compact, they accompanied Deganawida and Hiawatha to confront Atotarho.<sup>5</sup> When Atotarho consented to joining the Confederacy, he became instrumental assisting in the establishment the Great League. Finally, when all of the tribes assembled, the call went out to the tribes to bury their "war-clubs and other weapons" under the Great Tree of Peace, the Jonerahdesegowah.<sup>6</sup> This was the first step in achieving the Great Peace between the original five nations of the Iroquois (see figure 4).

After the establishment of the Great Peace, Deganawida and Hiawatha founded the Great Council of the Confederacy to maintain the peace among the five nations. This council provided the Iroquois greater power through a concentration of effort among the five nations and an increase in population through the unity of these tribes. One of the Confederacy's first actions focused on a series of wars against the neighboring tribes that had oppressed them in the past to include the Adirondacks. This war lasted over fifty years and near its end drew the newly arrived French into the conflict because of their alliance with the Adirondacks. These wars continued with the French because of further alliances with another tribal enemy, the Hurons. During these wars many other Indian

nations were either conquered outright or made tributary nations. It is still important to note that the Iroquois did experience some military set backs. One set back involved their disaster during King William's War in 1689. For the most part the Iroquois' wars assisted them in obtaining supremacy over their neighbors in the northeast.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 4. The Iroquois Confederacy prior to 1710

Source: Taken from Answers.com Website; available from [http://content.answers.com/main/content/wp/en/thumb/8/88/320px-Iroquois\\_5\\_Nation\\_Map\\_c1650.png](http://content.answers.com/main/content/wp/en/thumb/8/88/320px-Iroquois_5_Nation_Map_c1650.png).

Prior to 1763, the Iroquois did not lack native enemies and the threats were plentiful. Sometimes individual tribes would fight separate wars with enemies, which the Mohawks did in their wars against the Mahicans and Susquehannocks.<sup>8</sup> Both the Iroquois and their enemies fought these wars for the purposes of trade, revenge, and to secure more captives that would replenish their populations. The term mourning war involved the last two purposes and served as the main reason for the wars prior to the fur trade. When the European powers entered the scene in the early 1500s they assisted in continuing this constant warfare between the Iroquois and their neighbors. They did this

either directly or indirectly by adding to the motivations behind the three purposes. In Europe the great demand for fur sparked the fur trade in North America, which started the deadly competition over the exchange of pelts for European goods. In order for the Iroquois to find enough pelts to meet the European demand, they had to either hunt for these animals on lands belonging to other nations or seize them directly from other tribes. During the early part of the 1600s the Iroquois had the advantage over other tribes because the Dutch were willing to trade furs for firearms.<sup>9</sup> The French were not as willing to trade firearms with their neighboring allied tribes for the fear of their allies using these weapons on them. As thousands of Indians died due to the diseases brought over by the Europeans, both Iroquois and their enemies fought each other for more captives to fill their near vacant villages. These wars contributed to more wars conducted for the purposes of revenge and more captives.<sup>10</sup>

Even though the Great Council could declare war, the execution was far from centralized. The League did not have an established command structure during their wars. The Great Council did not seem to have the authority of power to establish a single commander. As a result, the command went to the chief with the “strongest will, or the most persuasive voice.” During the Confederacy, the Iroquois military system operated on a “system of voluntary service,” which was left entirely to private enterprise. This system contributed to the confusion because any warrior could “organize a war party and seek adventures wherever he pleased to direct his steps.” The Iroquois considered any non-allied nation as an enemy.<sup>11</sup> If successful, the warrior would be rewarded with increased prestige “among his kin and fellow villagers while raising his prospects for an



advantageous marriage.”<sup>12</sup> Another advantage would involve the successful warrior’s appointment to the title of a lesser chief.

With this system of independent leaders arose the potential for disagreement among war parties from different tribes within the League. In order to establish better supervision on the “affairs of war,” the Seneca Nation assumed two additional hereditary chieftaincy positions to act as supreme military chieftains for the Confederation. Their purpose was to unite the various war parties within the League into one organization with unity of effort. Even though these two chiefs had supervision over the war, they did not have to assume the actual command of the war parties. These two additional chieftaincies raised the number of Seneca hereditary positions from eight to ten on the Great Council. The purpose given for the assignment of these two chieftaincies to the Seneca was due to their location within the Confederacy. As Keepers of the Western Door, the Iroquois thought that the Seneca “would first to take the war-path to drive back the invader.”<sup>13</sup> This decision to add two more war chiefs assisted the Confederacy in focusing their resources and warriors on a single common enemy. Also, it added to a greater unity of effort among the independent tribes.

Besides achieving supremacy over its neighbors and individual warrior prosperity, warfare with other tribes had other advantages. Throughout the entire ritual of war, the whole village took part in the activity, which promoted strong group cohesion. It also focused on the pride of the Iroquoian people through their superiority over their enemies.<sup>14</sup>

Another factor that contributed to the increase in the Iroquois’s power and influence involved their common culture. Within this common culture, the Iroquois

shared some common underpinnings such as: the roles of their leaders and the influence of the matriarchal system; the process of unanimity; the concept of reciprocity; and religion. These areas played a key role in Iroquoian life prior to 1763.

In the Iroquoian world three groups came together to form the power structure that guided the Confederacy and the individual tribes. These groups included: the civil chiefs or sachems; the clan matrons; and the lesser chiefs. Of the three groups, the sachems held the preeminent position of the highest ranking group. They represented and led their tribes as the face of their people. The sachem was a hereditary position that represented an individual clan within a tribe and the Confederacy. These clans usually consisted of several extended families. Since the founding of the League, the position of the sachem passed hereditarily through the “female line” within a clan. This meant that the “successor might be any descendant of the late chief’s mother or grandmother.” Upon the death or a removal of a chief, it was the responsibility of the family’s chief matron to ultimately decide if the candidate would succeed the previous sachem.<sup>15</sup>

With the establishment of the Great Peace, Hiawatha organized a council of fifty League Chiefs, and the first fifty came from the sachems that led five original tribes. The first Grand Council divided the number of council sachems per each of the five original tribes in the following manner:

- Mohawks – nine chiefs
- Oneidas – nine chiefs
- Onondagas – fourteen chiefs
- Cayuga – ten chiefs
- Seneca – eight chiefs.<sup>16</sup>

With the establishment of the Great Council, these sachems controlled more than their individual tribes, when together they held the supreme power of the Confederacy.<sup>17</sup> The

number of these sachems established for the Great Council developed from the number of original chiefs present during the Confederation's founding. This number did not change even when the Tuscaroras later joined the League.<sup>18</sup> Even though the numbers of chiefs representing the tribes varied, each tribe had an "equal voice" within the council.<sup>19</sup> The main responsibility of these sachems focused on maintaining the peace, primarily within the Confederacy. Peace benefited the sachems because they enjoyed their greatest amounts of power and influence during these times. These sachems also had the responsibility of not only internal affairs, but external affairs, such as trade, alliances, and treaties. Trade and alliances benefited the sachems' power because of their position to receive presents, which they distributed to the people within their individual tribes.<sup>20</sup>

As the next most influential group within the Confederacy the clan mothers wielded much behind the scenes power. These women were the leaders within the clan and family and looked upon as the trustees of the Confederacy. The reason for their leadership sprang from the fact Iroquois society was matrilineal. While the men spent much time away from the village for the purposes of hunting, trade, and diplomacy, the women stayed home and tended to the agriculture, produced children, and internal affairs.<sup>21</sup> It was through this position as the sustainers of the power of the tribes and the Confederacy that the clan mother received their authority.

Through the control over their individual clans, the clan mothers exerted significant influence over the sachems. The position of these matrons almost equaled the sachems and they served as a check and balance over the sachems.<sup>22</sup> Some of the powers of the clan matron included: adopting and freeing captives; vetoing declarations of war;

and giving advice on matters of diplomacy. The most significant power they could employ was their ability to remove a sachem from office.<sup>23</sup>

The next significant class of rulers within the League was the lesser chiefs known as “Ha-she-no-wa-neh.”<sup>24</sup> The purpose of this non-hereditary position recognized talented individuals who distinguished themselves in the service of the Six Nations. The promotion of these chiefs focused on their military or oratorical success while in service. Some of these chiefs also served the clan matrons by speaking for them during the Confederation’s councils.<sup>25</sup> The rank of lesser chief allowed for any person, regardless of position in life to attain a higher position, even though this position died with the person. This allowed more talented people to take an active role in the affairs of the Confederacy and the individual tribes. Originally the lesser chiefs’ purpose revolved around serving as advisors to the sachems. As time progressed, this class gained in influence and some of these chiefs even became more important than the sachems themselves.<sup>26</sup>

Although the sachems possessed the supreme power over the entire Confederacy, their rule was far from absolute. This lack of absolute power manifested itself primarily in two specific areas--reliance on “public sentiment” and unanimity. During these annual meetings of the Great Council, the other two groups were present to ensure the chiefs listened to the will of the people. These groups represented the public sentiment from each tribe. All of these groups would be present throughout the entire council and would make their influence known to the sachem “whenever the subject itself aroused a general public interest.” After these groups deliberated on a specific subject, they would then relay their decisions to the sachems for their actions.<sup>27</sup>

In order to approve a law, the entire body of sachems within the Confederation must unanimously endorse the decision. This concept was not just limited to the Confederacy, but drove all decision making throughout Iroquois society, to include the separate tribes, villages and clans. This idea of unanimity rose to prominence because the Iroquois did not have a concept of majorities and minorities. This meant that all sachems within a tribe must obtain complete unanimity prior to casting their nation's vote in the Great Council. If the sachems could not agree on a topic or a decision, then it was "laid aside." It was the goal of the sachems on both sides of an argument or an issue to persuade the other side.<sup>28</sup>

Out of this system the use of persuasion over coercion became more important in winning over the opposition. In order to be successful in this environment, a sachem must possess key qualities that would assist him to gain influence. Some of these qualities a sachem included: skillful oratory, generosity, responsibility, imperturbability, and ability to compromise. Of course not every sachem had all of these qualities, especially in the area of public speaking and persuasion. It is also important to note that the people's perception of an "inherent conflict" between the "serene character" a sachem should exhibit and the conflict that could arise from persuading others. Some people within a tribe believed the action of persuasion, or just plain politics, as beneath the status of a sachem. From this need arose the positions of orators who assisted sachems in convincing dissenters. The most successful orators grew in importance and "wielded enormous influence" within the League.<sup>29</sup> The lesser chiefs with proficient public speaking skills assumed the positions as orators. This concept worked hand in hand with the sachems presenting the issues to the women and the lesser chiefs for approval. This kind of

decision making was witnessed by Adriaen Cornelissen van der Donck on his visit to Mohawk Country. In his visit, he wrote about what happened after the Confederacy decided on an issue:

A person gifted with eloquence and a strong, penetrating voice is called upon to speak. He recounts in fullest detail in a formal address and as agreeably as he can what was deliberated, decided and resolved. Then there is silence all around, and meanwhile the chiefs try to gain the community's approval of their decisions.<sup>30</sup>

If the orator could not convince these groups, then the decision failed. Through their own effectiveness, many Europeans believed that they were the leading chiefs and not the actual mouthpieces. Believing this, many European traders would try to exert influence over an orator, even though he had no real part in the decision-making process.

Another factor that affected Iroquois decision making involved the various factions within the Confederacy. Throughout the whole society, the individual interest of a group conflicted many times with the leaders in making any definitive decision. All levels experienced these factions, from clan level all the way to the Great Council. At times these factions could act more centrifugal than centripetal, creating a sense of hostility or friction. However, most of the time, the factions fit in with the normal decision making within the Confederacy.

With these factors that influenced the Iroquoian decision making, many issues that arose were either postponed until a later date or terminated. As a result important matters would take at least a year before the council made their decision. The benefits of this system prevented arbitrary leadership and maintained the "sovereignty" of each tribe.<sup>31</sup> While this delay was often frustrating for the European traders, the Iroquois would consider any decision that swiftly made as lacking genuineness.<sup>32</sup>

The problem with this decentralized form of decision making is that it often increased the level of factionalism among all echelons. When decisions couldn't be made, divisions would widen between the different factions. This problem was more prevalent in Iroquoian culture since there was no majority rule concept among the Iroquois. Over the years, the Iroquois experienced many different factions that divided its society. Two Confederacy-wide divisions existed prior to 1763. These divisions included the divisions between the Christians and traditionalists and the divisions between the Anglophiles and Francophiles. The only way to minimize these divisions lay in the hands of the orators with the tool of reciprocity.

In all Iroquoian alliances, whether internal or external, reciprocity formed the base that opened up dialogue. Whether it was trade or diplomacy, reciprocity between two groups of people proved good faith on both sides. In order for the individual nations of the Iroquois to maintain peace among each other, reciprocity served as the cement for continued unity within the Confederacy. This reciprocity manifested itself primarily through the presentation of gifts, to include wampum. Wampum is a string or a belt of different colored shells and beads created to have specific patterns. The Iroquois used wampum because of its accepted value among all the Indians. Many believed that wampum also possessed spiritual powers, which would help in solidifying the alliances between tribes.

Since the Iroquois did not have written records, wampum acted as the official transcripts of all Iroquois councils and diplomacy. Many Indians used wampum this way because it acted as a mnemonic device, which recorded the political and diplomatic communication between two parties (see figure 5).<sup>33</sup> The use of wampum during

diplomatic relations was significant because not much importance was given to the “promise or assurance of a foreign power, unless belts or strings were given to preserve it in recollection.”<sup>34</sup> For any meeting with the Iroquois, each word would be accompanied by belts and strings of wampum.” Each village had a “public treasury” that stored these valuable beads and shells.<sup>35</sup>

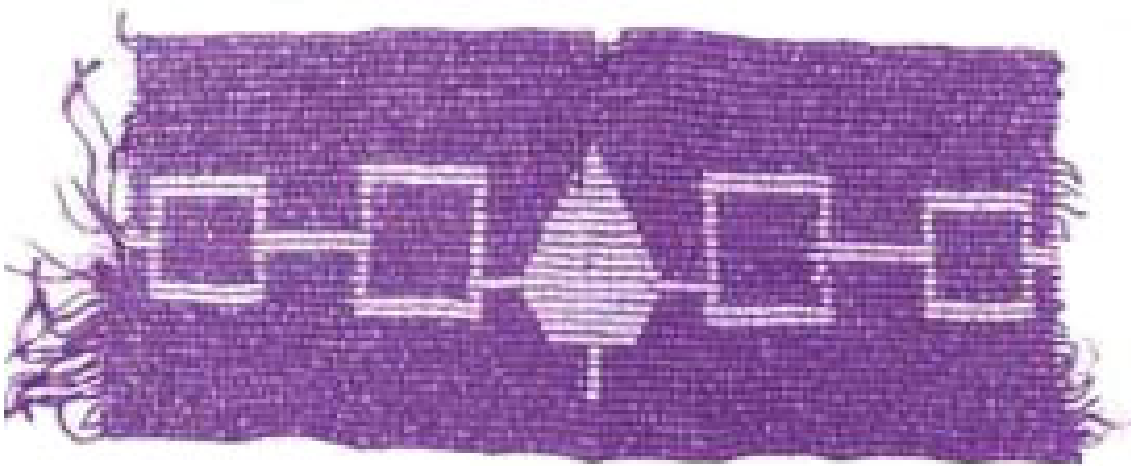


Figure 5. Hiawatha's Wampum Belt

NOTE: This belt signified the Great Peace among the Iroquois and remains a symbol of their nation today.

Source: Taken from the Hayehwatha Returns Website; available from <http://www.hayehwatha.org/1htpages/wampum.html>.

This concept of reciprocity worked to strengthen all levels within the Confederacy. One of the ways a sachem maintained the peace within his tribe involved the giving of presents to his people. While visiting in Mohawk country, the Dutch Reformed Church minister John Megapolensis Jr. observed this concept by writing:

The chiefs are generally the poorest among them, for instead of their receiving from the common people as among Christians, they are obliged to give to the mob; especially when anyone is killed in war, they give great presents to



the next of kin of the deceased; and if they take any prisoners they present them to that family into the place of the deceased person.<sup>36</sup>

The sachems made this reciprocity possible through their position to secure resources for the tribe through conquest, trade, or diplomacy. Through his acts of providing for his people, he maintained the peace, which subsequently maintained his own power within the tribe.

At the Confederacy level each tribe reciprocally sent embassies to each other throughout the year when the Great Council was not in session. An embassy would go to a tribe with gifts and many complements in order to strengthen ties between each other.<sup>37</sup> When this failed to occur regularly, the tribes would drift apart and the individual tribes would quarrel among each other. These quarrels occurred intermittently, but they would seldom lead to violence, but a few quarrels did. Father Paul LeJeune witnessed one of these violent quarrels that threatened the Confederacy with greater internal violence.

In the year 1657 a dispute between two tribes occurred between the Seneca and the Mohawks. This quarrel occurred over Seneca intentions to seek an alliance with the French and subsequently their native allies, the Huron and Algonquians. The Mohawks were outraged to find that one of their fellow members within the Confederacy would side with such an ancient enemy. During the many wars between the Iroquois and the Algonquians, the Mohawks experienced the greatest number of casualties due to their geographical proximity to the Algonquians. This situation worsened when two Seneca chiefs were murdered on their return from Montreal after peace talks. Many within the Seneca tribe believed the Mohawks committed these murders because of their opposition of the Seneca-Algonquin alliance. Following this offense, the Senecas prepared to go to

war against the Mohawks. In order to re-establish the peace it took all of the nations within the Confederacy to open a council to resolve the dispute.

During this council, all nations participated in a condolence ceremony over the deaths of the two Seneca chiefs. All nations, including the French observers, presented gifts to the Seneca as a symbol of their support. Through the reciprocal presentation of gifts, the Seneca and Mohawk were brought back into council participation. Because of this council, the two nations re-established peace between each other.<sup>38</sup>

As with many nations, religion serves to define its people. The Iroquois religion was no different in defining the Confederacy. Before the arrival of Christianity, the Iroquois had no factions when it came to religion. For the most part they all agreed. However, this changed with the arrival of the Christian missionaries. From the middle 1600s to 1763 many arguments within the Confederacy occurred over Christianity's influence. Many Iroquois believed that by adopting Christianity, the Iroquois would lose their national identity and take on a European identity. The Iroquois held their traditional beliefs as a matter of strength and pride. Prior to the opening of the Grand Council, many religious ceremonies occurred such as the rites of condolence of the departed.<sup>39</sup>

Other ceremonies included prior to the start of councils included the genealogy and origin of the Iroquois. The genealogy served an important function among the entire Confederation, which was observed by a soldier from New Jersey, Joseph Bloomfield. He wrote about the purpose of the reciting of the Iroquois genealogy:

The younger sort attend for their instruction. Here they learn the history of their nation; here they are inflamed with the songs of those who celebrate the warlike actions of their ancestors; and here they are taught what are the interests of their county, and how to pursue them.<sup>40</sup>

The reciting of the genealogy acted as a source of nation pride, which also served to educate the youth in their history. The religious aspect of the genealogy involved the speaker to trace the origins of the Iroquois people all the way back to creation. As religion served as a point of strength for the Iroquois during this time, it also encountered some problems that arrived with the new religion brought by the European missionaries.

The first Christian missionaries to enter Iroquoia in an organized manner were French. These missionaries came from the Roman Catholic Holy Orders of the Jesuit and Sulpician Priests. They arrived as a part of the terms of the 1665-1667 treaties with the French.<sup>41</sup> The Iroquois reluctantly welcomed them for the initial reason of ministering to the Christianized Huron captives. Through Jesuit presence in Iroquoia, the Iroquois believed that their captives would be more inclined to stay with their adopted families. These missionaries slowly gained in influence, especially during the times of great sickness. As noted by a Jesuit missionary, Father Jean de Lamberville, the greatest converts “has been among the sick.”<sup>42</sup>

The Iroquois believed in a supreme being called the Great Spirit who created all life on the world. The Iroquois also believed in an Evil Spirit who created everything bad in the world, such as the monsters, poisonous reptiles and toxic plants. This concept of good and evil was of course familiar to the beliefs of the European Christian missionaries, but the Iroquois had other beliefs not acceptable to the missionaries. One of these differences included the belief of inferior spirits who either assisted the Great Spirit or agents of the Evil Spirit. The spirit of He-no (spirit of the thunderbolt) was an example of a good inferior spirit. In order for the Iroquois to gain favors from the Great Spirit and his helpers, they would communicate through the burning of tobacco in thanksgiving.

The Iroquois also offered thanks for a variety of other objects to include: trees, shrubs, rivers, fire, and the sun and stars. Many missionaries openly did not approve of these rites of requesting favors and offering thanks.<sup>43</sup> Many missionaries, to include John Megapolensis, witnessed the rites performed to these spirits. One ceremony he observed included the rite to the spirit of Aireskuoni in which they promised to kill and eat their captives. After hearing this, Megapolensis perceived that this spirit was the devil and the Iroquois prayed to him for his favor.<sup>44</sup> He did not understand that Aireskuoni was the Mohawk spirit of war that assisted them in battle against their most violent neighbors.<sup>45</sup> The Iroquois also had other customs not in line with the European Christians, such as divorce, open sexuality between two people, and treatment of prisoners who were not adopted.

While the missionaries did not approve of the many parts of their culture, the Iroquois also did not entirely approve of many of the Christian beliefs because many believed it robbed them of their nationality. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries the Iroquois did not distinguish European culture with Christianity. For any Iroquois who chose to become a Christian meant that he or she ceased to be Iroquois and became French, British or Dutch. In the case of the Catholic converts, the traditionalist Iroquois viewed them as surrendering to the French.<sup>46</sup> The traditionalists regarded the French as hostile due to their support of their enemies during the Beaver Wars (1640-1650) and King Williams War (1689). Even though many missionaries went out and tried to understand Iroquoian culture, some of their actions substantiated traditionalist views. The most important action involved their prohibition for new converts to practice most of their tribal customs. These missionaries believed that these customs led to sin. For many

of the converted, the inability to participate in these customs and rites isolated them from the rest of their tribe.

Many converts fervently accepted the new religion and this caused a conflict between many traditional believers. One Christianized sachem, Garakontie, openly refused to participate in some of the customs and rituals. When his position required his participation, he minimized the significance of the custom. An example of this occurred when he was required to recite the genealogy and origin of the Iroquois in front of the other four nations of the Confederacy. During this gathering, Father de Lamberville observed his statement and wrote the following:

When he came to relate the genealogy and origin of the Iroquois, the description of which is nothing but a long fable, he always protested that what he was about to say was merely a formula which is usually followed on such occasions, but that it was not true; in fine, that all he would relate about the creation of the world was simply a story, and that Jesus was the sole Master of our lives. He is not content with teaching these truths by word of mouth; he teaches them to the others still better by his example, for he is exceedingly careful in performing all the duties and exercises of a Christian, wherever he may be.<sup>47</sup>

Unfortunately these statements produced much opposition from traditionalists within the tribes. This led to subsequent infighting between the two sides and this fighting led to an interruption in the operations of Iroquoian governance. Within the Confederacy, Iroquois Catholic Christian converts became French in the eyes of the traditionalists and potentially their enemies. The traditionalists goal was to lessen the legitimacy of these Christianized sachems and the decisions that they made.

No other tribe experienced as much in-fighting as the Mohawks since more of their own “embraced Christianity in greatest numbers and with the most fervor.”<sup>48</sup> Since the Catholic Mohawks sided with the French, the traditionalists sought the help from the British who took control of New Netherlands in 1664. In order to stop this in-fighting

Jesuit missionaries recommended that Christians move away from their villages and settle closer to New France. The majority of these Christianized Iroquois settled in a mission village called LaPrarie. Approximately 20 to 30 per cent of the Mohawks moved to LaPrarie by the 1680s.<sup>49</sup> With the departure of the Christianized Iroquois, the traditionalists won the day and maintained the status of their customary religious beliefs. The removal of Christian Iroquois caused problems for the remaining Jesuit missionaries. The loss of a dedicated Christian population exposed them to the growing threats of the traditionalists who regarded the loss of their fellow tribal members as an insult. After 1684 most of the Jesuits left Iroquoia for fear of their lives.<sup>50</sup>

Among the other tribes of the Iroquois distrust against the Christian religions increased due to the influx of the Tuscarora tribe who came to settle on their lands. The Tuscaroras were an Iroquoian speaking tribe that lived in North Carolina. Resulting from the Tuscarora War of 1711-1713, they lost their lands to British colonists and sought refuge among the Oneidas. After their settlement in Oneida Country, they became known as the Sixth Nation of the Iroquois. The new tribe brought with them much animosity against the Christian colonists and this spread among the many tribes to include the Oneida. This one act alone greatly contributed to the influence among the Iroquois traditionalists. The influx of refugees also increased the independent spirit of the Iroquois for a time.<sup>51</sup>

With the onset of European colonization of the North America in the late 1500s, the Iroquois came into increasing contact with their new neighbors. As time developed, they had experienced varying levels of either friendship or hostility. The French and the Dutch encountered the Iroquois first, followed by the English after their successful

annexation of New Netherlands in 1664. The prime reason for the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Confederacy and their Indian neighbors dealt with trade, primarily the fur trade. Due to the individual tribes' freedom to pursue their own interests, many Europeans had trouble in establishing and maintaining a Confederacy-wide alliance. Even after the signing of an all-encompassing peace treaty, it never lasted long. Dominance over the entire Confederacy during this time could not be possible because of this decentralized nature of government.<sup>52</sup>

How the Europeans dealt with the Iroquois varied on their motives, which sometimes changed over time. The Dutch's experienced the Iroquois, primarily the Mohawk tribe, when they moved north from New Amsterdam (present day New York City) and founded the trading post of Fort Orange, later Albany. The reason behind the establishment of why Fort Orange centered on the growing demand for pelts back in Europe. Once founded, Fort Orange assumed the role as the center of the North American fur trading empire. After convincing the Mohawks that they were not a threat to their security, the Dutch formed a very lucrative trading relationship. Other than the desire for furs, the Dutch had no other interest with the Confederacy.

This new relationship started a new series of wars based on trade. When the demand for furs became so great that the Mohawks and other Iroquois could not procure enough from their own lands, they moved against other tribes. The rewards for these incursions outweighed the threats of war because the Dutch paid their trading partners well through guns, alcohol (primarily rum) and other forms of European goods. Many French Jesuit Priests who ministered to the Iroquois' enemies observed these violent raids. In an account by Father Barthelemy Vimont, he wrote about how the Mohawks:

Makes incursions upon our Algonquians and Montagnais; and watch the Hurons at all places along the River, - slaughtering them, burning them, and carrying off their peltry, which they go and sell to the Dutch in order to have powder and Arquebusses and then to ravage everything and become masters everywhere, which is fairly easy for them unless France gives up help.<sup>53</sup>

These incursions led to French involvement with the Iroquois. Initially, the French regarded the Iroquois as enemies because of their aggression toward their native allies. Through their native allies, the French developed a successful and sometimes competitive fur trade. As a result of these hostile relations, the French had no other choice, but to go to war against the Iroquois in order to secure peace for their allies along with their fur trade. Starting from 1626, there seemed to be a continuous series of wars that involved either the whole or part of the Iroquois Confederacy. It also involved the French, who continued to look out for their own interests. Throughout the series of wars, the Iroquois destroyed many of its neighboring tribes, to include the Hurons. Also, the Iroquois experienced some catastrophic defeats, to include the Mohawk and Seneca Tribes.<sup>54</sup> Their significant losses resulted partially because of their geographical locations of being on the two most external nations of the Confederacy. Even though these battles continued to drain the Iroquois population, their successes and ferocity also served as a tremendous information tool. Through their war-time actions, many believed the Iroquois to be practically unbeatable in forest warfare. This belief brought all of the European powers to deal directly with them. Even with a loss in population, the Iroquois continued to make up population through the adoption of other nations, such as the Tuscaroras and the surviving Hurons. These factors formed the main reasons why the French and British sought the support from the Confederacy throughout the late 1600s and middle 1700s.



Since the French could not outright conquer the Iroquois, they looked for ways to influence them into peaceable relations. During times of peace, the French actively traded with the Iroquois and also sent Jesuit missionaries to their villages. Also, during the early 1600s, the French adopted a policy of keeping the Iroquois outside of the French sphere of influence. The purpose of this policy focused on keeping the French-allied Hurons separate from the Iroquois and subsequently the Dutch trading post of Fort Orange. The French did not want to lose their fur suppliers to the Dutch with better goods and prices for their furs.<sup>55</sup>

After annexing the Dutch colony of New Netherlands in 1664, the British sought to extend their influence in the fur trade. With the help of the former Dutch colonists, the British assumed the role originally established by the Dutch by opening up relations with the Iroquois. This opening of relations also started a new form of competition between the French and the British for dominance over the fur trade and ultimately all of northeastern North America (see figure 6). Both sides realized that they needed to enlist the support of the Iroquois in order to win this contest.

After accepting peace proposals from the French, many traditionalist Iroquois searched for a counterweight to the influential pro-French Iroquois. They remembered the past wars and still harbored hard feelings for the French. After 1664, the traditionalists believed that the British could serve as this counter. They did this for security against the encroachments and invasions of the French. After British involvement the Iroquois developed into three factions known as Anglophiles, Francophiles, and neutrals. These factions lasted until the end of the French and Indian War.

Depending on the situation and the sitting governor of New York, the Iroquois enjoyed great influence. Other times, the Francophiles or the neutrals secured power. One such Anglophile success occurred under the governorship of Edmund Andros. Through his efforts and those of the Anglophiles in the late 1670s, Britain and the Iroquois established an alliance based on the League of Great Peace. This alliance even included some of the rituals of the League of the Great Peace. Of course, when the British cooled on their support to the Iroquois, the Anglophiles influence within the Confederacy decreased. With British inaction in maintaining their alliance, the French either sought revenge for joint British and Iroquois actions through invasions. The vacuum of influence opened the door for the neutrals to seize the power. The decrease of the Anglophiles also led to the decline of British influence within the Confederacy.<sup>56</sup>

From the 1660s to 1763 both sides actively sent embassies and translators in order to obtain the support of the Iroquois. During this time, however, these translators did not possess the skills necessary to fill these diplomatic roles. In his article “Cultural Brokers and Intercultural Politics: New York-Iroquois Relations, 1664-1701,” Daniel Richter refers to these people as “culture brokers.” In his article, he defined their purpose as: providing nodes of communication; with respect to a community’s relation with the outside world, they “stand guard over crucial junctures or synapses of relationships which connect the local system with the larger whole.”<sup>57</sup>

Both Europeans and Iroquois had these brokers, but most of them had minimal affect in their influence of the other. This was especially true with the Europeans. Among the English and Dutch settlers, very few learned the Iroquois language. The only major exception of the rule involved the French Jesuits who took the time to learn both the

Iroquois language and customs. Even though the Jesuits were experienced in Iroquois customs, they believed them to contribute bad examples for their flock. With this in mind, the Jesuits did not completely use all of their knowledge in dealing with the Iroquois. For the most part, the interpreters among the English and Dutch did not attain a high level of education, nor did they rank high in the social scale. A good number of these translators-brokers during this time were of mixed blood. Many of them did not rate the respect of their European decision makers. Colonial leaders never trusted them fully, to make decisions, which caused the problem of making promises they often could not keep.<sup>58</sup>

Even the most educated and high born of the European brokers, such as the governors, did not take the time to familiarize themselves to the customs of the nation. Some of these customs included: the practice of exchanging of presents; referring to each other in kinship terms; and maintaining the alliance through constant meetings. Without the knowledge of the language and the customs, the Europeans did not have the ability to seriously influence Iroquois decision making. These two centuries represented a learning curve in understanding the Iroquois culture. This lack of appropriate knowledge in the Iroquois culture coupled with the decentralized form of government contributed to the Iroquois independence through the seventeenth and most of the eighteenth century.<sup>59</sup>

What did carry the favor of the Iroquois in obtaining their support included a large treasury spent on them by these two warring empires. In order to address the entire Iroquois Confederacy, the tribes must agree to hold a council. Hosting a council would require a tremendous amount of resources because they tended to last more than a day. This would require much food and drink in order to support the nightly feasts after the

council meetings. After the councils, European ambassadors would present the sachems with massive amounts of presents to include: clothes tools, food, rum, weapons, and ammunition. Of course it was the duty of the sachem to distribute these presents, which in turn would solidify his hold on power within his tribe.<sup>60</sup> European diplomacy adapted to the Iroquois world with the practice of giving presents. The Europeans did understand early how the reciprocal action of exchanging highly prized commodities portrayed friendship, generosity, and hospitality to the Iroquois. These gifts, which were “inseparable” from the words spoken and they assured both parties that their “promises were to be carried out.”

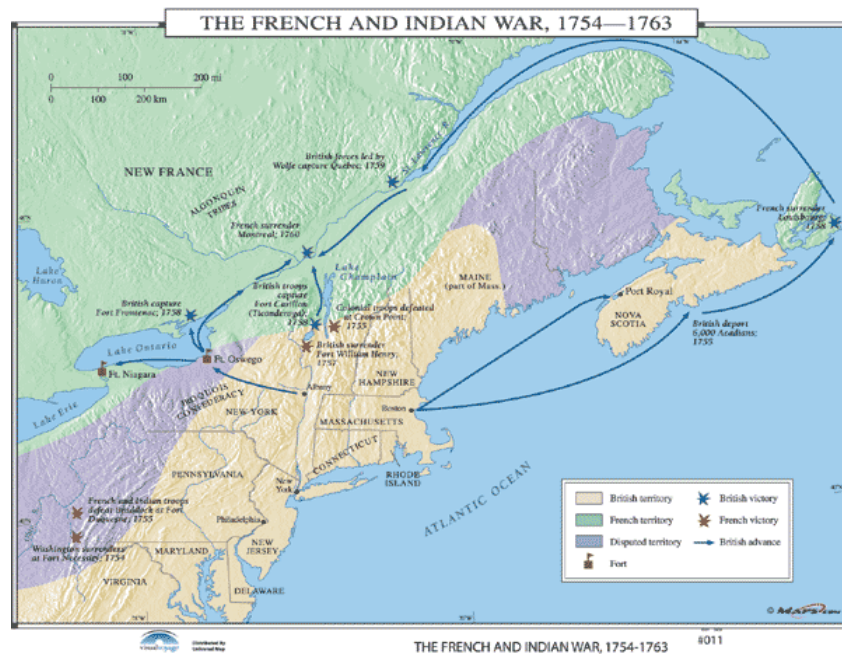


Figure 6. Map of Iroquoia Located Directly Between the French and British Colonies  
Source: Taken from World Maps Online; available from [http://www.worldmapsonline.com/UnivHist/30032\\_6.gif](http://www.worldmapsonline.com/UnivHist/30032_6.gif).

Not just a mere formality, the presentation of gifts served as a purpose of actual trade between the two parties. For that matter, the Iroquois believed that diplomacy and trade could not be dealt with independently. At these councils the Europeans would offer exotic goods that “made life easier.”<sup>61</sup> As the years progressed this trade for exotic goods began the Iroquois’ long dependence of European trade goods and also spurred on the fur trade in North America.

Resulting from this period, the Iroquois increased in power and material wealth due to the century long imperial competition between both France and Britain. With the exception of the Mohawks and a significant number of Seneca, who directly sided with the British and French respectively, the Iroquois maintained their neutrality during the imperial wars. As the two powers tried to control the actions of the entire Confederacy, they could at best win the entire support of no more than one tribe. The reason for this situation originated from the disunited political structure within the Confederacy and the lack of cultural knowledge on the part of the Europeans.

With this, the Iroquois also continued to maintain their independence between the two warring powers and gain both power and influence. Due to their loose governing nature, the Confederacy did not have any major problem with tribes or factions of tribes that chose sides between the French or British or remaining neutral. For the most part the tribes stayed somewhat neutral during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Even if the tribes supported different sides, the Confederacy maintained its unity as long as these tribes maintained their reciprocal relationships between them.

By the end of the French and Indian War, the Iroquois embraced the centripetal forces that led to their rise to dominance in the northeast. Of course the Iroquois did not have it easy during this period of time. They still experienced great plagues that wiped out entire villages and suffered through constant wars. These wars even took a toll on the Confederacy because of the more deadly weapons provided by the European nations along with their own direct participation in these wars. Through this period of heavy depopulation, the Confederacy remained together through the centripetal forces, which contributed to their CoG. Even though the centripetal forces dominated during this time, centripetal forces started to change, which some even transformed to centrifugal forces. Resulting from these changes would tip the balance in favor of centrifugal forces influence over the Confederacy.

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis Henry Morgan, *The League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee or the Iroquois* (North Dighton, MA: JPG Press, 1995), 4-8.

<sup>2</sup>Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: the Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Williamsburg: VA, The Institute of American History and Culture, 1992), 31.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>4</sup>Horatio Hale, "Hiawatha and the Iroquois Confederation: A Study in Anthropology," in *The Iroquois Book of Rites and Hale on the Iroquois*, ed. William Guy Spittal (Oshweken, Ont: Iroqrafts Ltd.), 36.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 30-32.

<sup>6</sup>Tehanetorens, *Roots of the Iroquois* (Summertown: Native Voices, 2000), 40.

<sup>7</sup>Morgan, *Ho-de-no-sau-nee*, 4-8.

<sup>8</sup>Paul LeJeune, "Relations of what Occurred Most Remarkable in the Missions of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, New France in the Years 1656 and 1657," in *Iroquois Wars II – Extracts form the Jesuit Relations*, ed. Claudio R. Salvacci and Anthony P. Schiavo (Bristol, PA: Evolution Publishing, 2003), 154.

<sup>9</sup>Claudio R. Salvacci and Anthony P. Schiavo, "Introduction," in *Iroquois Wars II: Extracts form the Jesuit Relations*, ed. Claudio R. Salvacci and Anthony P. Schiavo (Bristol, PA: Evolution Publishing, 2003), 9.

<sup>10</sup>Richter, *Ordeal*, 74.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 68-74.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>13</sup>Morgan, *Ho-De'-No-Sau-Nee*, 69.

<sup>14</sup>Richter, *Ordeal*, 36.

<sup>15</sup>Hale, "Book of Rites," in *Book of Rites*, 85.

<sup>16</sup>Tehanetorens, *Roots*, 38.

<sup>17</sup>Morgan, *Ho-De'-No-Sau-Nee*, 59.

<sup>18</sup>Elisabeth Tooker, "Eighteenth Century Political Affairs and the Iroquois League." In *The Iroquois in the American Revolution: Research Records No. 14*, ed. Charles F. Hayes III (Rochester: Rochester Museum and Science Center, 1981), 7.

<sup>19</sup>Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 14.

<sup>20</sup>William N. Fenton, "Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making," in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, ed. Francis Jennings, William N. Fenton, Mary A. Druke, and David R. Miller (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 11.

<sup>21</sup>William, N. Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 214.

<sup>22</sup>Richter, *Ordeal*, 216.

<sup>23</sup>Barbara Graymont, "The Six Nations Indians in the Revolutionary War," in *The Iroquois in the American Revolution: 1976 Conference Proceedings*, ed. Charles F. Hayes III and Ann Pritchard (Rochester, NY: Research Division of the Rochester Museum and Science Center, 1976), 31.

<sup>24</sup>Morgan, *Ho-De'-No-Sau-Nee*, 67.

<sup>25</sup>Fenton, *Great Law*, 207.

<sup>26</sup>Graymont, *Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 23.

- <sup>27</sup>Morgan, *Ho-De'-No-Sau-Nee*, 66.
- <sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 106-107.
- <sup>29</sup>Richter, *Ordeal*, 46.
- <sup>30</sup>Adriaen Cornelissen Van der Donck, "Description of New Netherland – 1653," in *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives About a Native People*, ed. Dean R. Snow, Charles T. Gehring, and William A. Starna (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 125-126.
- <sup>31</sup>Morgan, *Ho-De'-No-Sau-Nee*, 107.
- <sup>32</sup>Richter, *Ordeal*, 42.
- <sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.
- <sup>34</sup>Morgan, *Ho-De'-No-Sau-Nee*, 114.
- <sup>35</sup>Richter, *Ordeal*, 47.
- <sup>36</sup>Johannes Megapolensis, "A Short Account of the Mohawk Indians – 1644," in *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives about a Native People*, ed. Dean R. Snow, Charles T. Gehring, and William A. Starna (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 46.
- <sup>37</sup>Pierre Millet, "Letter from Father Millet to Reverend Father Dablon – 1674," in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610—1791*, Volume 58, Ottawas Lower Canada, Iroquois, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland, OH: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1899) 185.
- <sup>38</sup>LeJeune, Paul, "Relations of what Occurred Most Remarkable in the Missions of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, New France in the Years 1656 and 1657," in *Iroquois Wars II: Extracts form the Jesuit Relations*, ed. Claudio R. Salvacci, and Anthony P. Schiavo (Bristol, PA: Evolution Publishing, 2003), 144-153.
- <sup>39</sup>Richter, *Ordeal*, 40.
- <sup>40</sup>Joseph Bloomfield, "The Memoir of Joseph Bloomfield – 1776," in *In Mohawk Country*, 285.
- <sup>41</sup>Daniel K. Richter, "Cultural Brokers and Intercultural Politics: New York – Iroquois Relations, 1664 – 1701," *The Journal of American History* 75, No. 1, (June 1988): 47.
- <sup>42</sup>Jean De Lamberville, "Of the Mission of Sainte Marie Among the Lower Iroquois and of the Mission of Gandaouague or of Sainte Pierre, in the Country of the Agnie – 1672-1673," in *In Mohawk Country*, 178.



- <sup>43</sup>Morgan, *Ho-De'-No-Sau-Nee*, 147-156.
- <sup>44</sup>Megapolensis, "Account," *Mohawk Country*, 45.
- <sup>45</sup>Fenton, *Great Law*, 272.
- <sup>46</sup>Richter, "Cultural Brokers," *American History*, 48.
- <sup>47</sup>Jean De Lamberville, "Of the Mission of Saint Jean Baptiste at Onnontague – 1674," in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610–1791*, Volume 58, Ottawas Lower Canada, Iroquois, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland, OH: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1899) 209.
- <sup>48</sup>Claude Dablon, "Of the Agnie Mission – 1673-1674," in *In Mohawk Country*, 185-187.
- <sup>49</sup>James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6.
- <sup>50</sup>Daniel K. Richter, "Cultural Brokers and Intercultural Politics: New York-Iroquois Relations 1664-1701," *The Journal of American History* 75, no 1 (June 1998): 55.
- <sup>51</sup>Richter, *Ordeal*, 239.
- <sup>52</sup>Claudio R. Salvacci and Anthony P. Schiavo, "Introduction," in *Iroquois Wars I: Extracts form the Jesuit Relations, 1535-1650*, ed. Claudio R. Salvacci and Anthony P. Schiavo (Bristol, PA: Evolution Publishing), 5.
- <sup>53</sup>Barthelemy Vimont, "Of Incursions by the Hiroquois and the Captivity of Father Jogues – 1642-1643," in *In Mohawk Country*, 15.
- <sup>54</sup>Claudio R. Salvacci and Anthony P. Schiavo, "Introduction," in *Iroquois Wars II*, 6-11.
- <sup>55</sup>Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), 87.
- <sup>56</sup>Richter, "Cultural Brokers," *American History*, 53-65.
- <sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.
- <sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>59</sup>Fenton, "Process of Iroquois Treaty Making," in *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 5-27.
- <sup>60</sup>Richter, "Cultural Brokers," *American History*, 59.

<sup>61</sup>Richter, *Ordeal*, 47-49.

### CHAPTER 3

#### CENTRIFUGAL AND CENTRIPETAL FORCES IN IROQUOIA AFTER 1763

Prior to the end of the French and Indian War the Iroquois success came at a considerable price. By that time the Iroquois had been actively at war with its neighbors and their European allies for over one hundred years. During these years of warfare, the Iroquois successfully maintained its borders against its Indian and European neighbors (see figure 7). This constant state of war contributed to various changes that affected its centripetal forces, which adjusted the centripetal-centrifugal balance in favor of the centrifugal side. After 1763, the centripetal forces that strengthened the Iroquois center of gravity (CoG) of its national identity started to disappear. Also, the critical capabilities previously identified as centripetal forces that previously contributed to the CoG's strength started to act more centrifugal leading up to 1763. These forces focused on its cultural factors. The Confederacy's unity weakened because of population depletion and the pressures inherent in European expansion. When these capabilities weakened they pulled the six nations apart. One such transformation of the Confederacy's critical capability involved the cultural aspect of Iroquoian leadership. Due to the severe loss in population from war and disease, the balance of power between the three leadership classes changed. This balance of power devolved into a more factional self-centered focus.

With the changes in the Confederacy's critical capabilities and outside pressures, the centripetal forces that dominated the outcome of the League weakened. As these centripetal forces decline, the centrifugal forces grew stronger, pulling the League apart.

These centrifugal forces that dominated after 1763 overcame the Confederacy's centripetal forces that lie within the League's internal capabilities (i.e. cultural features).

With the increase of white influence over the Iroquois, the League's internal capabilities weakened. As the whites extended their westward movement towards the boundaries of Iroquoia, they became more proficient in the Iroquoian language and culture. These whites represented the colonial government and started to manipulate the Confederacy. Along with these capabilities and severe population loss, the cultural critical capabilities that strengthened the League's CoG failed.

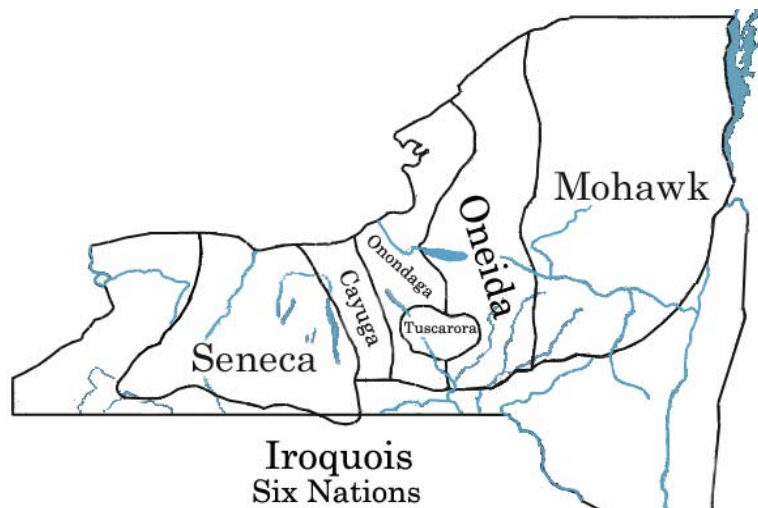


Figure 7. The Iroquois Confederacy Circa 1763

NOTE: From the later part of the 1600s to the 1700s, the Iroquois accepted many foreign tribes into or adjacent to its borders. The Oneidas accepted the Tuscaroras into their country in the early 1700s.

Source: Taken from Answers.com Website; available from [http://content.answers.com/main/content/wp/en/4/4b/Iroquois\\_6\\_Nations\\_map\\_c1720.png](http://content.answers.com/main/content/wp/en/4/4b/Iroquois_6_Nations_map_c1720.png).

Some of the changes that led to the overall and permanent split in the Confederacy happened were present prior to 1763. One of the most significant forces dealt with the Confederacy's cultural reaction to these changes. These changes affected a once strong repository of critical capabilities that strengthened the Confederacy's CoG. The changes that effected Iroquoian culture included: the changed roles of their leaders (sachems, clan matrons and lesser chiefs); unanimity; reciprocity; and religion.

Resulting from the ravages of many years of disease and war, brought about by European contact, the Confederacy's leadership capabilities started to weaken. This of course affected the governing capabilities within the Confederacy. From the 1600s to 1763, the Iroquois Nation incurred a significant loss in population. In one estimate the population of the entire Confederacy went from around 20,000 in the early 1600s to approximately 10,000 by the late 1600s.<sup>1</sup>

Of these Confederacy-wide fatalities, the Mohawks experienced the most drastic losses. During his travels in the Mohawk country, Jasper Danckaerts made the observation concerning the population situation of the Mohawks as, "there is now not 1/10th part of the Indians there once were, indeed, not 1/20th or 1/30th."<sup>2</sup>

Another view of this depopulation came from the Dutch barber-surgeon Harmen Meynderts van den Bogaert on his travels through Mohawk Country. On his way to one of the larger villages, a Mohawk named Sikaris accompanied him who presented the conditions in his country. During this journey van den Bogaert wrote:

After we had gone one half mile over the ice we saw a village with only six houses. It was called Canowarode, but we did not enter it because he said that it was not worth much. After we had gone another half mile we passed a village with twelve houses called Schatsyerosy. This one was like the other, saying that it was not worth much. After we had gone a mile or a mile and a half past great

tracts of flatland, we entered a castle at about two hours in the evening. I could see nothing else, but graves.<sup>3</sup>

This view of the countryside told a tale of the sizeable depopulation within the tribe, which had lasting effects over its critical capabilities.

The significant number of deaths contributed to a loss of capable hereditary civil chiefs (sachems). As with the overall decrease in the population, the number of capable sachems decreased as well.<sup>4</sup> The result led to a leadership vacuum ultimately filled by the clan matrons and lesser chiefs who possessed different goals than that of the sachems. This lack of a world view weakened this group whose main purpose involved maintaining the peace within the Confederacy.

The traditional way to increase the population among the Confederacy involved the conduct of mourning wars to secure adoptable prisoners. Besides forced adoption, the Iroquois decided to accept refugees from their former enemies and allies. Some of these nations included: Tuscarora, Shawnee, Delaware, Nanticoke, and Conoy. These peoples either settled within the boundaries of Iroquoia or on areas conquered by the Iroquois for the purposes of defending their “natural avenues of approach.”<sup>5</sup> These peoples either served as a way to increase the Confederacy’s population or as satellite nations that buffered the Six Nations.

These adopted people came from various nations and held beliefs and languages that differed from the Iroquois. The goal of the individual tribe focused on overcoming these previously held beliefs and language barriers in order to absorb them into the society. Adopted people underwent a thorough, but quick process of assimilation into the tribe. This came from their internal processes of informal education. The Confederacy’s informal education revolved around the abilities of the elders to maintain this cultural

knowledge. In his travels through Iroquoia, Warren Johnson, Sir William Johnson's brother, made an observation concerning both the adoption and Iroquoian education.

When the Indians lose a man in action and chance to take an enemy prisoner, he belongs to the family of the deceased, who take great care of him and look on him in the same light as on the person lost and even leave him the same fortune. Indians greatly reverence their forefathers, whom they look upon to have been the wisest of men and are themselves obliged to such persons as to keep up to their laws, ceremonies and customs.<sup>6</sup>

After an adoptee assimilated into the tribe, he or she could rise to high positions within both the tribe and the Confederacy. One example of this assumption of a high position involved the French Jesuit, Father Millet. His involvement and knowledge in the Oneida Nation led to his assumption of a sachem seat on the Grand Council during the 1690s.<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately this process started to fail with the deaths of many older members due to constant disease and war. With the lack of knowledgeable teachers in the Iroquoian culture, the people lost much of their national identity. Through the loss of these teachers many rituals that contributed to the national identity started to disappear. In fact, many observers believed that by the late seventeenth century the adopted peoples outnumbered the native Iroquois.<sup>8</sup>

Because the Iroquois could not find capable sachems to maintain the peace and govern both the Confederacy and the tribes, a vacuum emerged. With this vacuum, the two other ruling groups, the clan matrons and the lesser chiefs, gained in influence. Of these two groups, the one that could gain the most influence within a tribe ended up in control. The influence of these two groups would fluctuate at both the tribe and Confederacy level throughout this period. With every change in power, there was a responding change in the direction of the tribe and the League. Factionalism became prevalent.

As the trustees of the Confederacy, many of these matrons began to exercise more power in the absence of qualified sachems. Since they had the authority to both install and remove sachems, the clan matrons started to more directly affect the governing of the Confederacy.

Perhaps the most notable clan mother was Molly Brant of the Mohawk Nation (see figure 8). Not only did she wield much power because of her position, but she had considerable influence due to her close relationship with the British Commissary for Indian Affairs, Sir William Johnson as his mistress-wife.<sup>9</sup> During the American Revolution, many clan matrons played a key role in turning the majority of the Iroquois in the favor of the British. With her connections to the Johnsons, Molly Brant did not hide her support for the British and actively recruited for them. During the American Revolution, clan matrons such as Molly Brant traveled throughout Iroquoia to secure this support. Her effort significantly contributed to the split between two factions during the later part of the Revolution.

One of the most preeminent leaders of the post American Revolution Seneca Nation, Governor Blacksnake, recalled the importance of the clan matron in the events leading up to the Iroquois involvement in the Revolution. In his memoirs, Governor Blacksnake mentions the following, “amongst the warriors disturb made and appeared to be divided and the red coat officers found that Indian warriors are split and also the female sect likewise then began to use their influence over the warriors.”<sup>10</sup> Another observation of the importance of the matrons came from one of the British Indian Department’s most prominent agents, Daniel Claus. He once remarked how valuable her influence was among the Iroquois. He stated that her word carried more value than any



white man who had to purchase influence.<sup>11</sup> Her word carried well while she resided at Fort Niagara. These observations typify the importance of the clan matrons' influence over the Iroquois.



Figure 8. Bust of Mary “Molly” Brant, Koñwatsiätsiaiéñni

NOTE: She was a Mohawk clan matron and sister of the war chief Joseph Brant. She was one of the most influential Iroquois during and after the American Revolution.

Source: Taken from Parks Canada Website; available from [http://www.pc.gc.ca/docs/r/system-reseau/sec4/sites-lieux47\\_e.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/docs/r/system-reseau/sec4/sites-lieux47_e.asp).

The second group to gain in power resulting from the sachems' lost influence was the lesser chiefs. Originally, these chiefs obtained their title from their skills as either a warrior or orator. In fact many of these chiefs acquired greater renown in US history than their sachems, men such as: Joseph Brant (Thayendanege), Red Jacket, Cornplanter, and Chainbreaker.<sup>12</sup> Many lesser chiefs gained tremendous influence within both the entire Confederacy and the individual tribes.

Many lesser chiefs desired war because of the opportunities war offered. Through war, a victorious, but ordinary man could achieve great influence among his people. Both

ordinary warrior and war chief sought this increase in influence.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the hundred plus years of intermittent warfare, the lesser chief (mainly the war chief) rose in prominence leading up to the year 1763. Along with their rise in prominence, the war chiefs' ranks increased in number. The increase in the number of war chiefs also contributed to the erosion in the status of the sachem. Through their numbers and contribution to the Iroquois war effort, they started to demand a more visible position on the council when it came to peace treaties.<sup>14</sup>

While the power and influence of the sachem decreased, the war chiefs started to turn their tribes to fight in more conflicts. The sachems had little power to place them in check. As one Onondaga sachem spoke:

Times are altered with us Indians. Formerly the warriors were governed by the wisdom of the sachems, but now they take their own way & dispose of themselves without consulting their uncles the sachems – while we wish for peace and they are for war. Brothers they must take the consequences.<sup>15</sup>

This situation started as early as the French and Indian War and many Europeans and colonist witnessed this division through the signs and statements made by the war chiefs. During a conference at Johnson Hall, a Seneca war chief explained the lack of Seneca sachems. He stated:

The reason that you do not see many of our sachems at present here is that the weather & roads having been very bad, they were less able than we to travel, & therefore, we the warriors, were made choice of to attend you & transact business; and I beg you will consider that we are in fact the people of consequence for managing affairs, our sachems being generally a parcel of old people who say much, but who mean or act very little, so that we have both power & ability to settle matters, & are now determined to answer you honestly, & from our hearts to declare all matters fully to you.<sup>16</sup>

As the sachems continued to lose effective control over the war chiefs, peace between the nations of the Confederacy began to fail.

In the long list of lesser chiefs, Joseph Brant by far gained in predominance for his efforts to deliver the entire Confederacy over to the British camp during the Revolution (see figure 9). He excelled in influence through his personal connections with the Johnson family and his own abilities.



Figure 9. Joseph Brant, Thayendanege

NOTE: He was a Mohawk war chief and brother of clan matron Molly Brant. As a war chief he was instrumental in bringing a significant number of the Confederacy over to the British side.

Source: Taken from American Revolution.org; available from Website <http://www.americanrevolution.org/ind1.html>.

Joseph Brant grew up in an influential Mohawk family that had close ties with the British Commissary of Indian Affairs, Sir William Johnson. His family's ties to Johnson came from his sister Molly's marriage to Johnson. From his connections with Johnson, he received a quality education from the Reverend Eleazar Wheelock at his Moor's Indian Charity School.<sup>17</sup> This school also educated the Reverend Samuel Kirkland, missionary

to the Oneida Nation. During his time there, Brant prospered and received many personal accolades from the Reverend Wheelock. In Wheelock's letter to Sir William Johnson, he wrote about Brant's progress:

Joseph appears to be a considerate, modest, and manly spirited youth. I am much pleased with him. If his disposition and ability, upon further trial, shall appear as inviting as they seem to be at present, there shall nothing be wanting within my power to his being fitted, in the best manner for usefulness.<sup>18</sup>

Through his close connection with Sir William Johnson he received many advantages such as his schooling. From these advantages, Brant was able to develop his extraordinary leadership abilities. George Clinton, the first governor of the State of New York, remarked upon Brant's many qualities:

One of the most enlightened Indians in peace, and the most cruel and ferocious in war, the country ever produced. He lived with the whites, obtained a fair education and returned to his savage life. His bearing was dignified and his manners were courteous in the extreme.<sup>19</sup>

With these qualities he also gained tremendous support from many within the British Government. He converted this support from the British to the favor of the loyalist Iroquois. He also had a personality that attracted many followers, both Indian and white. When not at war, Joseph Brant spent much time trying to convince the Six Nations to "take up the hatchet" against the Americans. During the spring of 1777 Governor Blacksnake witnessed Joseph Brant's influence in action at an Iroquois council held by the British at Fort Ontario (present day Oswego, NY). At this conference, he watched Brant's persistent actions to convince the Confederacy members. Blacksnake remembered the following:

Brant was there all time during the convention and he all time favor for Great Britain side in relation to the offered, which the red coat man, by which use his influence to going to effect by the wishes of Great Britain government after our own convention adjourned until the next day.<sup>20</sup>

Through his effort and along with his sister's, the majority of Confederacy sided with the British. Within the Confederation, a significant minority existed that did not side with the British. The division between these two factions contributed to the final breakup of the Confederacy.

The change in the balance of power between Iroquoian leadership also contributed in reducing the importance of unanimous decisions. In the past this concept served the Confederacy well by contributing to a unity of effort and purpose between the six nations. When the Great Council reached a unanimous decision, the Confederacy completely united behind the decision. When the sachems could not reach a unanimous decision, they laid the issue aside. Many attribute the loss of this concept to the increased influence of the Europeans and their colonists. The tools that whites used to end this concept consisted of bribery and liquor.<sup>21</sup> During a conference with the British, an Onondaga chief, Tenhoghskweaghta, spoke about this lack of unanimity:

It is very true you have some friends to our common island among the Six Nations and you have some enemies. It is perhaps must be with us as it is with you white people. We have some Indians that turn enemies to their native land. We could wish there were more such on this island our common dwelling place.<sup>22</sup>

The above statement of the sachem proved that the concept of unanimity had seen its last days. This change also contributed to the increase in the influence of the British and the Americans in subordinating the Iroquois. This loss of unanimity ultimately played a key role in the division of the Confederacy because the six nations could not agree on who to support. As a result, the Confederacy covered its fire in 1777, permanently ending the League.<sup>23</sup>

One of the most key concepts in keeping the unity within the Confederation involved the concept of reciprocity. Prior to 1763, this concept served the Confederacy in

preventing wars between the six nations. This concept involved many facets, such as the sending of embassies; condolence ceremonies for the deceased; and the Confederacy's councils. All of these facets required the participation of the sachems, who presided over these ceremonies. The Jesuit missionary, Father Millet, described the intricacies that involved such reciprocity rituals. In 1674 he observed the details of an embassy in Oneida Country.

They all march gravely and in file. One of the most notable men walks at the head, and pronounces a long string of words which have been handed down to them by tradition, and: which are repeated by the others after him. The ambassador who is to be the spokesman comes last of all, singing in a rather agreeable tone; he continues his song until he has entered his cabin, around which he also walks five or six times, still singing; then he sits down, last of all. There the pledges of friendship are renewed, and presents are given to dispel fatigue; to wipe away tears; to remove scales from their eyes, so that they may more easily see one another; and, finally, to open their throats and give freer passage to their voices. These presents are followed by food served to the ambassadors, by way of refreshment. Then they are asked for news concerning their nation, and they reply by recitals that sometimes last nearly all night, On the following day they rest, and on the third they deliver their harangue, display the collars, and make known the object of the embassy. A reply is given to them on the following day, after a public dance around the collars. The whole concludes with a feast and with mutual thanks.<sup>24</sup>

With the loss of many qualified sachems, these reciprocity rituals and the procedures behind them began to fade. One example of this occurred in December 9, 1758. On this day Sir William Johnson attended an Oneida condolence ceremony. The ceremony centered on the loss of Kindarunte, one of their sachems. He died at the hands of a French and Indian raiding party in Oneida country. In order to maintain reciprocity within the Confederacy, all nations had to attend. While present, Johnson observed that the Mohawks did not attend. When asked about this, the Oneida chief sachem, Conochquieson, stated that they did not understand why the message did not get to the

Mohawks. During the council, Johnson made a statement that summed up the severity of this dereliction of maintaining the customs. He told the Oneidas:

I am surprised you did not acquaint me and the Mohawks at the same time. They are the head of the Confederacy, that would have been proper & keeping up to your former & once established engagements & customs, but I am sorry to see you daily falling off from & neglecting them which were so salutary & prudent that your wise & brave ancestors flourished in their days by an observance of them.<sup>25</sup>

Not only did the Mohawks fail to attend the ceremony, but the message that went out to the western tribes did not pass through all of Iroquoia. The Cayuga prevented the messengers from going further west. This meant that the two tribes that had greater leanings to the French (Cayuga and Seneca) did not attend the condolence ceremony.<sup>26</sup>

Another reason for the Oneidas neglecting the Mohawks involved the increasing jealousy between the two tribes. During the council, Conochquieson told Johnson the various grievances they had over trade goods and other supplies. He told Johnson that their crops of corn failed that year and they sent their people to find sustenance. He went on to say that the Mohawks, who considered themselves the fathers of the Oneidas, did not provide them any supplies. Along with this, the Oneidas also complained about the minimal support they received from the garrison at Fort Stanwix (located in present day Rome, NY). He also told Johnson how the Onondaga received more provisions from the commanding officer than the Oneidas.<sup>27</sup> This example is one of the first instance of the wearing away of the process of reciprocity and how each tribe started to focus on themselves.

These results manifested themselves after the loss of power and influence of the sachems. Since the founding of the League, the sachems' main purpose centered on maintaining the peace created through the establishment of the Confederacy. When the

sachems power waned, both the power and influence of the clan matrons and lesser chiefs waxed. For the most part, their focus did not revolve around maintaining peace within the Confederacy. Their focus rested on sustaining the tribe and conducting war respectively.

Another significant change in the overall Iroquois culture concerned the religious beliefs. During the seventeenth century, many Iroquois experienced great turmoil over their introduction to Christianity. After its introduction, significant numbers within the Confederacy (primarily the Onondaga, Mohawk and Oneida tribes) embraced the new religion. This new religion had many conflicts with the Iroquois culture. For that main reason a great number of Iroquois rushed to the defense of the old ways, which caused infighting within the tribes. At that time, the major representation for Christianity within Iroquoia came from the French-backed Jesuit order. The traditionalist Iroquois did much to portray their Christianized members as more French than Iroquoian. This defense of its culture failed to occur primarily among the eastern nations of the Confederacy around the year 1763.

As the religious change within the eastern part of the Confederacy occurred during the middle to late eighteenth century, no tribe embraced Christianity as fast as the Mohawks. By 1755 the Mohawk nation mostly adopted Anglican Christianity, mainly as an alternative to the previous French influence. Along with providing an alternative for the French, the eastern Iroquois sought out these missionaries for the purposes of material advantage. One material advantage the Iroquois sought involved a blacksmith to reside in their villages. To obtain the most support the Iroquois would use the missionaries as an opportunity to play the British against the French. In 1706, the Cayugas told the



Governor of New York that they would not accept a French priest if they send a minister, a blacksmith, and a brazier.<sup>28</sup>

Also, the Mohawks and many of the Iroquois, they perceived the missionaries as embassies to communicate with the European powers. When requesting military support from the British, the Mohawks and the Oneidas would also ask for missionaries. These missionaries tended to have close ties with their governments. Also the Mohawk adoption of the Anglican faith coincided with their strong connections to Sir William Johnson, an Anglican, who had spent many years living among them.<sup>29</sup>

At first for the Mohawks, many of the Dutch and Anglican missionaries preferred to minister close to the fort. They seldom traveled to Mohawk villages, which meant that the Protestant Mohawks could do what they pleased and still call themselves Christians. As time progressed and just as with the Catholic Iroquois of the past century, many Oneidas and Mohawks took to the Protestant religions in earnest. Many would turn away from and forget their previous shamanistic ways.<sup>30</sup> One such example of the eastern Iroquois sincerity came from a letter from an Iroquois village to Sir William Johnson. In the letter, they wrote:

We thank our great brother that he has taken care of our souls & has directed our good fathers & brethren at Boston to teach us religion, which we begin to see a little into and it appears to us to be honest and beautiful. And we inform our brother that our good fathers & brethren at Boston have sent us a minister from whom we receive the messages of the Gospel gladly and who writes these things at our desire.<sup>31</sup>

Prior to 1755, the British did not have much interest in the active conversion of the Iroquois. This changed in 1755. The new approach stemmed from their overall war plans against the French. In General William Shirley's letter to Sir William Johnson he told him to:

Dispose them as much as you can, to be desirous of having English Ministers reside among them, in like manner as the Mohawks have for the instruction of them in the knowledge of the Christian Religion, and performance of Divine Worship among them; as also to teach their children the Indian language; and to let them know in such case I will order chapels to be built for that purpose, and procure ministers to do the before mentioned duty among them; and acquaint them that their brethren of the Mohawks castles have found great benefit and satisfaction from it.<sup>32</sup>

The military purpose of this directive concentrated on countering the effects of French influence through the Jesuit missionaries. Because of geography, the British could only influence four of the six nations because both the Cayuga and Seneca were too far west and out of their control.<sup>33</sup> For these two nations, they experienced mainly French influence due to the establishment of Fort Niagara (located near Niagara Falls).

The purpose of driving the French Jesuit influence out of Iroquoia even motivated a separate effort from the colonies. The Reverend Eleazar Wheelock established the Moor's Indian Charity School in 1761 for the purpose to "polish and Christianize" them. In his letter to Sir William Johnson, Wheelock wrote:

We have been persuaded, that the education of some of their sons in the liberal arts and sciences, as well as in the knowledge and practice of the Protestant religion, and the fitting of some for missionaries among their respective tribes, might have a happy effect to guard them against the influence of Jesuits; be an antidote to their idolatrous and savage practice; attach them to the English interest, and induce them to a cordial subjection to the crown of Britain, and it is to be hoped, to a subjection to the King of Zion.<sup>34</sup>

Even after the war, the Iroquois' western nations primarily seemed to have little interest in converting to Christianity. In 1765 the Reverend Samuel Kirkland (the first white graduate of Moor's Indian Charity School) set out to the Seneca country in the hopes of attaining new followers to the faith (see figure 10). Prior to his departure, one of the Oneida sachems by the name of Good Peter warned him about his mission to the

Seneca. He told Kirkland that “it was too soon; that their minds were not yet calmed, after the tumults and troubles of the late war.”<sup>35</sup>

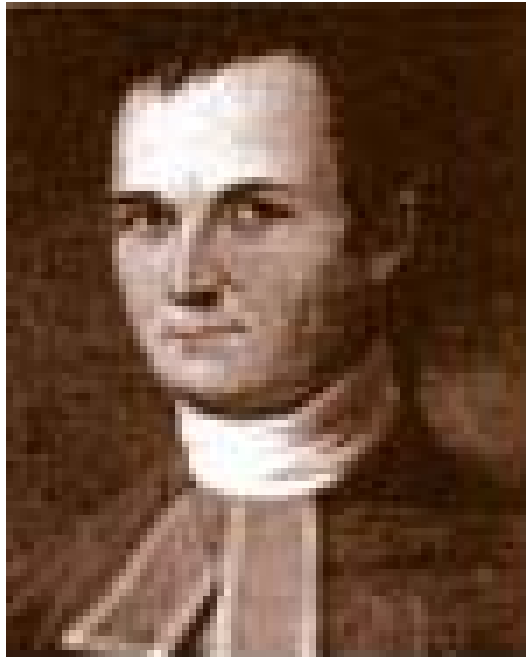


Figure 10. Samuel Kirkland by Augustus Rockwell

*Source:* Taken from Oneida County Historical Society website; available from <http://www.oneidacountyhistory.org/HallOfFame/HOF.asp>.

While assigned to the Seneca, Kirkland experienced many difficulties. There he encountered the same resistance as the Jesuits experienced many years before. Upon his arrival, the head sachem, by the name of Saghaengwaraghtons, welcomed him officially, and within four days he was dead. Many within the tribe perceived his death as a punishment for his offense to the great spirit. One of the chiefs stated:

Brothers, this is not agreeable to ancient traditions. Our forefathers used to say Thaonghyawagon (upholder of the skies) was the sole superintendent over all Indians of every nation inhabiting this our island & that he was delegated for this purpose & that he prospers them in hunting, & gives them success against their enemies in time of war, & warns them by certain signs of approaching danger.<sup>36</sup>

From this incident, many Seneca believed that Kirkland's presence had to be for evil purposes. After two years of hardship, Kirkland decided to move back east in May 1766. He assumed the duties as missionary to the Oneidas on 1 August 1766. From that time on, Kirkland developed tremendous rapport with both the Oneidas and the Tuscaroras as their spiritual leader.<sup>37</sup>

In conjunction with the changes in religion, the Iroquois experienced a more effective European influence in the middle part of the eighteenth century. The Iroquois felt this influence throughout the entirety of its Confederacy. Throughout the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries, the European emissaries to the Iroquois proved largely ineffective in achieving their imperial goals. Separated by the frontier and lacking knowledge and experience in the culture, the only major contact with the Iroquois involved the fur trade and war. From the middle part of the eighteenth century the European powers and their colonists started to apply all forms of national power (i.e., diplomatic, information, military, and economic) with increasing success.

Few among the colonial Europeans attempted to learn the Iroquois language and culture. Of the ones who did, the colonial aristocracy thought they possessed little socially redeeming qualities. However, a few of these ambassadors and translators did achieve some success among the Iroquois. Some of these included: the Jesuit missionaries, Arent Van Curler, and Peter Schuyler. For the most part the reason for their knowledge centered around two areas – religion and trade. Nevertheless, these representatives did not completely understand Iroquoian customs. This lack of understanding kept the European powers from dominating the Confederacy prior to 1763.

At best, both the British and French powers could only secure alliance with only some of the tribes at any given time.

During this time more colonists started to move closer to the borders of Iroquoia from the east and from the south in the Susquehanna Valley. Many of these people came as traders and more of them started to reside with the eastern tribes, primarily the Mohawks. The contact between these peoples forged a greater reliance on both parties. Both sides attained a familiarity that they had not experienced previously. One of the most influential Europeans who forged a close relationship with the Mohawks eventually earned great influence and power within the British Empire. Through his close connections with the Mohawks and his personality, Sir William Johnson became the first British Commissary for Indian Affairs (see figure 11).



Figure 11. Sir William Johnson, British Commissary for Indian Affairs  
*Source:* Taken from EarlyAmerica.com Website; available from  
<http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/fall96/johnson.html>.

When Johnson first moved into the borders of Iroquoia as a merchant, he set up his shop west of Schenectady and worked directly with the Mohawks.<sup>38</sup> During his time trading with the Mohawks, Johnson worked hard to learn their language and culture. He also established many business and friendship relations with the Mohawks, to include all of the three ruling groups. He also established personal affairs with some Mohawk women. He had several children resulting from these affairs. Of these women, the last one, Molly Brant, carried much prestige as the granddaughter of the powerful sachem, Chief Hendrick.

While there Johnson worked hard to support the interests of the crown against the French. In recognition for his knowledge and relationship with the Mohawks, General Braddock gave him the position of Commissary for Indian Affairs in 1746. Later, King George confirmed this position and made him a baronet for his success in leading an Iroquoian war party against the French. This action resulted in the capture of the French commander, Baron Dieskau, at Lake George.<sup>39</sup>

During his tenure as Commissary of Indian Affairs, Johnson spent much time living with the Indians. His personal relationship with the Mohawks helped him to establish closer ties with the other tribes of the Confederacy and ultimately other non-Iroquois natives. He even took up residence within Mohawk country and established a house that became the seat of power for the department and a local colonial seat of government (Johnstown, New York) (see figure 12). Throughout the many wars between the French and the British and after, Johnson worked hard to establish good relationships with the Iroquois, especially the Mohawks. To the Iroquois, he represented all forms of British national power, to include military. During the French and Indian War he

commanded the Iroquois volunteers and eventually achieved the rank of general and earned the title of baronet.

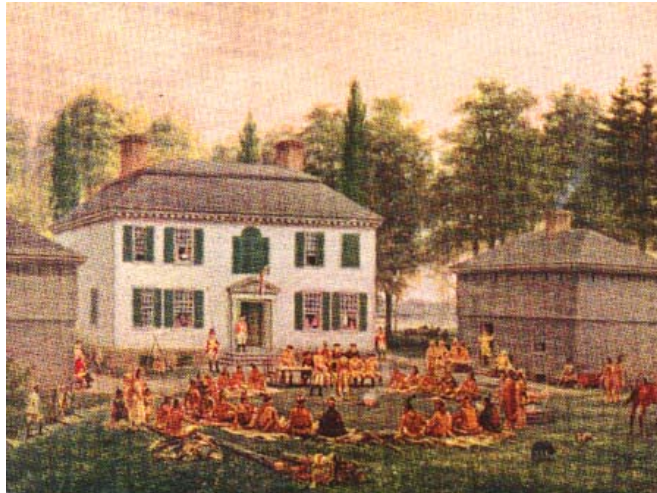


Figure 12. The Council Fire at Johnson Hall

NOTE: The house doubled as the home of Sir William Johnson and the seat of the Department for Indian Affairs. Here he held many meetings with the Indians to include the Iroquois.

*Source:* Taken from Johnstown, NY, Website; available from <http://www.johnstown.com/johnson.html>.

Johnson conducted many councils with the Iroquois and addressed many of their concerns. He would relay to them the position of the crown and try to resolve any grievances or problems among the Confederacy. These councils of course also appealed to the reciprocal nature of the Iroquois and the crown invested a lot of money. In one letter, he asked for support and he received five thousand pounds sterling to provide “cloaths, arms, and other necessities for them.”<sup>40</sup>

While attending the various councils throughout the Confederacy, Johnson took great measures to solve many of their problems. During one of these councils, Johnson

addressed a problem that a Tuscarora chief had concerning the loss of his horses. In the official council transcript, he wrote that in “Pennsylvania six horses were taken from him and his company by some persons unknown in the night time, and that enquiry & search were made after said horses to no purpose--that the said six horses were worth fifty pounds.” During the council he reported to the chief that the Governor of Pennsylvania consented to “make satisfaction.”<sup>41</sup>

After the French and Indian War, his influence among the Six Nations rose to a new height. For most of the tribes, his opinion carried great value. During a council with the Oneida and Tuscarora Nations, the Oneida sachems asked him who out of them should he chose to succeed a sachem that just died.<sup>42</sup> By means of his personal relationship with the Iroquois, he obtained an extensive sway over the majority of the League.

When he created the department, Sir William worked to find capable men who understood the Indians of North America, primarily the Iroquois. Of his staff, Johnson employed: Sir Guy Johnson (his nephew), Daniel Claus (German immigrant), and Joseph Brant. Of these people, all of them had a thorough knowledge of both the language and the culture, which instilled Iroquois confidence in the department. Brant had the greatest advantage of these talented agents through his experience of both the Iroquois and English cultures. Daniel Claus wrote about Brant’s value to the department:

The late Sr. Wm. Johnson sent him to a good English school where he soon made such proficiency as to be able not only to read and write English surprisingly well, but soon undertook to translate English into the Mohawk or Iroquois Language & so vice versa and that so well that the late Sr. Wm. Johnson found him very serviceable in translating in speeches of moment to be made to the 6 Nations in council to translate them in writing into the Iroquois Language in order to convey to the Indians the full meaning & substance of such speeches,



which Indian interpreters who in general are a dull illiterate kind of white people never were capable of doing.<sup>43</sup>

Through this department of competent and capable agents, Johnson successfully influenced the majority of the Six Nations. After his death, some of them still competently managed the relationship between the Iroquois and the British. They accomplished this through the constant reminder of Sir William's support and devotion. Also, they continued to remind the Iroquois of the power of the British Crown and how they will support them.

On the other side of the Revolution, the Americans also had highly competent emissaries who shared personal relations with Iroquois. Of the Americans that held influence with the Iroquois, the list included Philip Schuyler and the Reverend Samuel Kirkland. As the great-nephew of Peter Schuyler, Philip Schuyler represented the ties that the Iroquois had with the Dutch and English during the 1600s. Schuyler represented the brief, but close relationship between them, known as the Covenant Chain.<sup>44</sup> Kirkland represented the new spiritual connection of the Oneida and Tuscarora.

Of the most influential representatives on the American side, the Reverend Samuel Kirkland played a key role in securing the support of two of the six nations of the Iroquois. Prior to his assuming the commission of missionary for the Oneidas, he spent many years learning about the Iroquois culture and language. Kirkland had the distinction as the first white man to attend the Moor's Indian Charity School. While there he formed a connection with Joseph Brant and subsequently with Sir William Johnson. Through their initial support, he learned the Mohawk language from Brant and received support from Johnson in forging connection with influential Iroquois, such as Good Peter. His most in depth learning experience came from his first attempt as a missionary to the

Senecas. There he completely immersed himself in the culture, such as living “almost wholly on Indian fare.”<sup>45</sup> His first assignment lasted for over a year and ended in failure with much friction from the nation’s majority. The experience Kirkland obtained matched the knowledge and understanding that the Jesuits possessed prior to 1763. Kirkland’s language and cultural experience best prepared him for his assignment in Oneida country.

As the spiritual leader of the Oneidas, Kirkland took on duties he did not anticipate. For his position in the nation, the Oneidas expected him to assist them in their earthly needs. When the nation experienced seasons of famine, they expected him to provide food and clothing for the needy families. This support required great amounts of money to provide for their needs. In order to support the Oneidas, he made several appeals back east to the Reverend Eleazar Wheelock, and later the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SSPG) in New England, to obtain additional resources.<sup>46</sup> In time he proved successful in providing for the both the mortal and spiritual needs of the Oneidas. He took on other projects for the improvement of the tribe. When he felt that the Department of Indian Affairs did not respond to the needs of the Oneidas fast enough, he would raise the issue to a higher level. One example focused on the request for a blacksmith to reside in Oneida country to repair tools and weapons. In the letter of Oneida sachems, the request went to the Governor of New York. The letter stated, “We stand in great need of a blacksmith to work for us here at our own place--if it be, but a short while, perhaps six months or a year--in which time some of our young men might acquire a small degree of skill in a trade.”<sup>47</sup>

With these accomplishments in support of the Oneida nation, Kirkland gained great influence with the tribe. By 1774 he even started to make considerable headway

with the previously disaffected Tuscaroras. With his presence, he filled the void that Department of Indian Affairs left within Oneida and Tuscarora nations. In a letter written by the sachems to Sir William Johnson's replacement, Guy Johnson, they stated that "however brother you have not always been with us to see & know our conduct, you have only sometimes heard of our difficulties."<sup>48</sup>

When Kirkland changed his allegiances over to the American cause, he took over a greater position in the eyes of the Oneidas. As a subordinate to Schuyler, he assumed an additional duty besides acting as God's representative. He now acted as the representative to a new government on the continent. Through his link with the new government, Kirkland could obtain required resources for the Oneidas and Tuscaroras.

With his increased influence among the Oneida and the Tuscarora, Kirkland also assumed the duties that both the sachems and Iroquoian culture (i.e., reciprocity) could no longer solve. Besides ministering to their religious needs, caring for their life support, he also had to resolve quarrels among members of the tribe. By this time Kirkland took on the role as a centripetal force within the Oneida tribe.<sup>49</sup>

During the French and Indian War, both British and French sought locations that would better place them in positions to influence the Six Nations. One of their initiatives involved the establishment of forts within the boundaries of Iroquoia. All through the war both nations established forts to include: Fort Ontario (British), Fort Johnson (British), Fort Stanwix (British), and Fort Niagara (French). These forts had two purposes. The first purpose involved the establishment of closer political influence between the European powers and the Iroquois. The second purpose for the establishment of these forts involved the British and French competition over the fur trade with Iroquois. By being closer to

their territories, both nations believed that the Iroquois would conduct more trade with them.

With these reasons, the European powers convinced the Iroquois to allow them to establish these forts within their territories. For the most part, this convincing took place at the tribal level. One of the most important promises involved more goods at better prices. After 1759, the British seized Fort Niagara, which centralized British military supremacy over the lands of the Iroquois.

As the war ended, the Iroquois desired the British to remove these forts because they did not believe these forts provide many benefits. In a council at Fort Niagara Sir William Johnson addressed the concerns of the Iroquois. He told them:

We have taken all measures in our power to render the Indian trade as extensive, and advantageous as possible for you, and I am surprised you have not already felt the effects of our endeavors from the number of traders, well furnished with goods who daily resort to your country, for the promoting of which trade, and the preservation of goods & merchandise, as well for our mutual security and protection, those posts which you seem to wish destroyed are so essential that I am astonished you should wish their demolition.<sup>50</sup>

Based on this statement, the British had no intentions for reducing these forts. Since the individual tribes approved of the establishment of the forts, the Confederacy did not have complete unity to demand their removal.

As the prospects for trade spurred many Europeans out to the borders of Iroquoia, a new trade arose that brought in more whites into Iroquoia. From the seventeenth to the middle eighteenth centuries, the fur trade drove the economies of both the Iroquois and the colony of New York. During this time the European desire for fur drove the Iroquois and their neighbors to search out pelts in their land and on the land of their neighbors.

This frenzied search for pelts led to many wars between the Iroquois and their neighbors. Another result was the depopulation of many fur bearing animals within the northeast.

Due to the fur trade, the Iroquois came to depend on the supply of European goods that changed their way of life. The problem at that time entailed that they had fewer pelts to trade in exchange for these goods. From the fur trade, the Iroquois and other Indians acquired many European goods, which came with them a notion of prestige. The goods offered by the Europeans offered variety with more intricate designs than the traditional goods due to European manufacturing capabilities. Many times, the Europeans even provided goods with designs according to Iroquois specifications.<sup>51</sup> The standard goods the Iroquois desired included: metal tools (such as knives and hatchets), brass and copper pots, firearms, ammunition, textiles, and alcohol. Originally thought of as luxury items, these goods eventually changed into necessary objects for daily living. The decline in the fur bearing population also had another negative aspect by increasing Iroquois reliance on European goods. Through this decline, the Iroquois could not clothe themselves in their traditional manner because of the decline in the population of fur bearing animals. They had no other choice than to rely on European textiles. By 1763, the Iroquois had neither the desire nor the ability to return to their previous way of life.<sup>52</sup>

Still desirous for European goods, the Iroquois and the other Indian nations turned to the only commodity they had left to trade, their land. With the disappearance of the smaller fur-bearing animals, such as the beaver, the ecosystem of the northeast changed. The dams that the beavers maintained broke and the many ponds spilled across the country side. This left much soil-rich land available for large herbivore animals.<sup>53</sup> Many colonists desired this land to feed their cattle and grow crops.

By way of land procurement, many colonists thought up various schemes to attain Indian land cheaply. The Iroquois witnessed how their native neighbors, the Algonquians, lost their lands to the colonists. They saw how their extensive territories and villages disappeared through the acts of the “Yankees” and relegating them to small enclaves.<sup>54</sup>

Of the Iroquois, the Mohawks experienced the colonial land expansion first. The reason for this involved their proximity to the colonists in the east. The colonial land speculators’ tactics to procure land from the Mohawks involved getting the warriors or sachems drunk and persuading them to sell the land at low-cost. One such colonial speculator by the name of Uri Klock used these tactics to the anger of the Mohawks. In a meeting held at Fort Johnson the Mohawks complained about his tactics:

He met with three, or four of our young men who are going to hunt, and invited them to his house, where after making them very drunk, he proposed to them his desire of purchasing some of their lands on the north side of the river and pressed them to execute a deed for the same; which the for some time refused to (altho’ in liquor) as sensible it was improper for them to do; but he plying them with more liquor (which you know how it is almost impossible for them to resist) and they being some of the most addicted thereto of any of our people, he at length prevailed on them to assent thereto.<sup>55</sup>

The Mohawks referred to his actions as “villainous and unbrother-like” and no one from the colonial government attempted to stop him. They also explained how land given away must be unanimous, but during meeting the sachems ratified some of the previous actions. This ratification went against Iroquoian culture.<sup>56</sup>

The problems that arose from colonial procurement of land also centered around two different concepts of land ownership. For the Europeans, the individual owned the land. Many Indian nations believed that people “owned what they made with their own hands.” The Iroquois believed that land ownership belonged to the entire people. For the most part, the Iroquois, like many Indian nations, believed that the individual could only

own the right to use the land. This use only lasted for a certain amount of time, which the people would move on to another area. Even the land a single village rested did not belong to that village because the village would eventually move to another site. Many colonists tried to obtain land ownership from the sachems, which perceived them as monarchs, but had no right to give away land in the European concept.<sup>57</sup>

Resulting from these shady land deals, the British looked for ways to slow the colonists' western encroachment onto Indian lands. The first attempt at establishing a boundary between the colonies and Indian lands came from the Royal Proclamation of 1763. This proclamation established the boundary between the colonies and the Indians as the Appalachian Mountains. The second attempt arose out of the inability of the British to enforce this vague boundary established by the Proclamation. On 1768, many of the Indian nations, to include the Iroquois, met with the British Commissary for Indian Affairs at Fort Stanwix to correct this situation. The result of the Treaty of Fort Stanwix established more permanent borders, but it also pushed these borders further west into Iroquoia, primarily Mohawk country. The Mohawks ended up surrounded by new colonial neighbors.<sup>58</sup>

Another problem developed between the colonists and the Mohawks involved the destruction of Mohawk crops. In order to maintain their agriculture, the Mohawks had various tracts of land used at various seasons. The destruction of their crops happened as result of cattle from their new colonial neighbors straying from their fields. The cattle destroyed many acres of Iroquois crops. This happened on a regular basis and during the time of Sir William Johnson's administration, the Mohawks would go to him for remuneration.<sup>59</sup>

With the spark of Revolution in the colonies, both sides initially sought to keep the Iroquois out of the war. Both sides communicated to the Six Nations that this was a family quarrel and they did not seek their aid. This started to change around 1776 and both sides attempted to secure Iroquois' support. As the population of American farmers increased in both New York and Pennsylvania, the British saw this area as an important supplier for the Continental Army. They had to stop this area's productivity, but they lacked the manpower to accomplish this objective. The Iroquois with a handful of loyalist and regular forces could disrupt this production. On the other side, the Americans looked to the Iroquois to secure the peace in this region.<sup>60</sup>

From 1776 to 1779, both sides held many expensive meetings with the Iroquois Confederacy in order to court their support. The British attempted to secure Iroquoian support through two strategies. These strategies focused on reminding the Iroquois of their old alliance connections that dated back over 100 years and entice their support through economic incentives. The last strategy proved effective due to the disruption of trade because the war closed their main trading outlets. With forts along the coasts in Iroquoia, the British provided the goods that the Iroquois required. They also took the opportunity to portray the Americans as "land-grabbing frontiersmen," and themselves as the defender of Indian lands.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, the Americans turned to the Confederacy asking for support with promises of goods. They also reminded them of their dual old obligations to the Covenant Chain alliance founded in Albany.

As both sides worked to convince the Iroquois to join them, they encountered many within the League who wanted to remain neutral. During a council held by the Americans, Mohawk chief Abraham told them:



We shall hold the one as the other; we shall interpose in the quarrel between the Americans and the King of Great Britain. If one of the parties should request us to come & help them we will answer no, it is contrary to our treaty. As you have begun the quarrel you must make it out between you, we will remain neutral spectators of it.<sup>62</sup>

While the neutral parties pushed to stay out of the conflict, the League faced many pressures from American and British representatives and their allies within the Confederacy. The British persuaded the Iroquois that they could fulfill their needs and rewarded for their loyalty. In a council, the British commissioner assured the Iroquois that:

Our father will support you all the necessaries of such war utensils gun and powder and lead and Tomahawk and sharp edges (swords) and provisions and all the sitmerations (time rations) will be well supply in all times in during the upporation of the family quarrels.<sup>63</sup>

With all of the pressures and promises, by 1777 a significant percentage of the Confederacy, to include the entire Seneca nation, supported the British. The majority of the Oneida and the Tuscaroras supported the Americans.

As the Confederacy's tribes turned to support the two warring sides the division grew. The first spark occurred during the Battle of Oriskany on August 6, 1777. Prior to the battle, Joseph Brant along with several other British officers convinced the majority of the Confederacy to pledge their support to the British. Of the Iroquois that sided with the British, the entire Seneca provided unanimous support. The Seneca accompanied the British with them on their siege of Fort Stanwix. The British invited the Seneca to attend this siege for the purpose of witnessing a British victory over the helpless Americans. During the siege, the British learned of American plans to lift the siege. The British met the Tryon County Militia near the Oneida village of Oriska. During the battle, the Seneca joined the British against the Americans and their Oneida allies. As a result, of the battle,

the Seneca suffered sixteen dead, the most out of the British side. After this battle that pitted two tribes against each other, the motive for more involvement in the Revolution focused on revenge over the losses on both sides.<sup>64</sup>

Resulting from this battle, the tribes of the Six Nations began to fight each other. The engagements included open battles and the destruction of villages. These engagements covered approximately a 100-mile belt of frontier land stretching from the “Monongahela River to the Mohawk.” The force that made up this frontier campaign included Tory rangers, under the command of Major John Butler; and Iroquois, under the command of Joseph Brant. In this campaign, many frontier villages suffered attacks from the British and Iroquois. Some of these villages included: German Flatts, New York; Cherry Valley, New York; and Fort Freeland, Pennsylvania.<sup>65</sup>

The American response for these attacks culminated with General John Sullivan’s campaign through Iroquoia in 1779 (see figure 13). The purpose of his mission entailed of “punishing the Iroquois in their homelands around the Finger Lakes of New York,” which would restore the peace within the area. His force comprised of sixteen regiments and an Oneida contingent. Many villages and crops were put to the torch.<sup>66</sup>

The results of this campaign led to a continuation of a blood feud by the Iroquois. In 1780, the Iroquois and Tories paid back the Americans and their Oneida and Tuscarora allies. The pro-British Iroquois attacked many American villages to the east along with their allies, the Oneidas and Tuscaroras.<sup>67</sup>



Figure 13. Sullivan's Campaign through Iroquoia Route

Source: Taken from Early America.com Website; available from <http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/1998/sullivan.html>.

At the end of the Revolution, the Confederacy and their lands lay in ruins. The face of Iroquoia changed significantly as a result. Of the thirty Iroquois villages that existed prior to the war, only two survived undamaged. In order to survive, many Iroquois fled to the British-held Fort Niagara, where they had to rely on British rations for subsistence.<sup>68</sup>

With the change of forces from centripetal to centrifugal, the center of gravity of the Iroquois Confederacy weakened severely. Once a source for strength, by the early 1700s the Iroquois culture weakened the unity of command and effort among the Confederacy. Of the aspects of culture (i.e., leadership, reciprocity, unanimity, and

religion) changed, factionalism throughout the League strengthened. The League did not have the self-reliance to resolve internal disputes it had prior to 1763.

When the internal Confederacy factors weakened, the external factors strengthened. This greatly increased the Iroquois reliance on outside support. Over time, the European powers and their colonists went from being incapable of influencing the Six Nations to becoming dominant. The change occurred through their employment of all four elements of national power. Through diplomacy, competencies in language and cultural knowledge improved. Of the information elements, both Americans and British promoted their honesty in dealing with the Iroquois and their ability to provide for their needs. Both factions within the Confederacy believed both of their white sponsors. Through military actions, especially during the Revolution, both sides tried to impact Iroquoian decision by making attacks into Iroquoia (i.e., Sullivan's Campaign against the British-backed Iroquois as well as Butler and Brant's attacks on American villages).

As the Revolution progressed, the fissures between the two factions widened, causing violence between them. After the war, both sides lost. When the war concluded, many Americans moved westward into Iroquoia buying out their lands. The separate tribes could not stand up against American encroachment. As with the Algonquians, the once powerful Confederacy broke into a series of small reservations (see figure 14).



Figure 14. Remaining Iroquois Communities after the Revolution

NOTE: Torn between to nations--the division is complete.

Source: Taken from Historical Narratives of Early Canada Website; available from <http://www.uppercanadahistory.ca/1812/18123.html>.

<sup>1</sup>William N. Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 21.

<sup>2</sup>Jasper Danckaerts, "Journal of a Voyage to New York and a Tour in Several of the American Colonies in 1679-1680 - 1680" in *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives About a Native People*, ed. Dean R. Snow, Charles T. Gehring, and William A. Starna (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 125-126.

<sup>3</sup>Hamen Meynderts Van den Bogaert, "A Journey into Mohawk and Oneida Country 1634-1635," in *In Mohawk Country*, 4.

<sup>4</sup>Fenton, *Great Law*, 22.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph R. Fischer, *A Well Executed Failure: The Sullivan Campaign Against the Iroquois July – September 1779* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 15.

<sup>6</sup>Warren Johnson, "Journal of Warren Johnson – 1760-1761," in *In Mohawk Country*, 257.

<sup>7</sup>Fenton, *Great Law*, 294-295.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 22-31.

<sup>9</sup>Francis Jennings, "Iroquois Alliances in American History," in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, ed. Francis Jennings, William N. Fenton, Mary A. Druke, and David R. Miller (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 57.

<sup>10</sup>Benjamin Williams, *Chainbreaker: The Revolutionary War Memoirs of Governor Blacksnake, As Told to Benjamin Williams*, ed. Thomas S. Abler (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 76.

<sup>11</sup>Fischer, *Executed Failure*, 21.

<sup>12</sup>William N. Fenton, "Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making," in *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 13.

<sup>13</sup>Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 20-21.

<sup>14</sup>Fenton, *Great Law*, 11.

<sup>15</sup>Philip Schuyler, "Johnstown Conference – March 7, 1778," in *Indian Affairs Papers: American Revolution*, ed. Mary B. Penrose (Franklin Park, NJ: Liberty Bell Associates, 1980), 115.

<sup>16</sup>William Johnson, "Journal of Indian Affairs, Dec 9-12, 1758," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, vol. 3, ed. Milton W. Hamilton and Albert B. Corey (Albany, NY: The University of the State of New York, 1951), 697-698.

<sup>17</sup>Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743-1807: Man of Two Worlds* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 69-71.

<sup>18</sup>Eleazar Wheelock, "From Eleazar Wheelock to Sir William Johnson, November 2, 1761," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, vol. 4, 557-558.

<sup>19</sup>George Clinton, *Public Papers of George Clinton: First Governor of New York, 1777-1795 – 1801-1804, Military* vol. 1, (New York, NY: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co, State Printers, 1899), 163.

<sup>20</sup>Williams, *Chainbreaker*, 78.

<sup>21</sup>William N. Fenton, "Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making," in *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 13.

<sup>22</sup>Philip Schuyler, "Johnstown Conference," in *Indian Affairs Papers*, 115.

<sup>23</sup>Fenton, "Structure, Continuity, and Change," in *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 31.

<sup>24</sup>Pierre Millet, "Letter from Father Millet to Reverend Father Dablon – 1674," in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610–1791*, vol. 58, *Ottawas Lower Canada, Iroquois*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland, OH: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1899), 185.

<sup>25</sup>William Johnson, "Journal of Indian Affairs, Dec 9-12, 1758," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, vol. 10, 65-76.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>28</sup>Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Williamsburg, VA: The Institute of American History and Culture, 1992), 221.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>31</sup>Eli Forbes and Asaph Rice, "From Indians at Oquaga, August 30, 1762," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, vol. 4, 872.

<sup>32</sup>William Shirley, "Instructions to Major General William Johnson – January 13, 1756," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, vol. 2, 410-411.

<sup>33</sup>The Earl of Loudon, "Letter from the Earl of Loudon – June 1757," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, vol. 4, 410-411.

<sup>34</sup>Eleazar Wheelock, "From Eleazar Wheelock to Sir William Johnson, June 1761," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, vol. 10, 309.

<sup>35</sup>Samuel Kirkland, *The Journals of Samuel Kirkland: 18th Century Missionary to the Iroquois, Government Agent, Father of Hamilton College*, ed. Walter Pilkington (Clinton, NY: Hamilton College, 1980), 3.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>37</sup>Clarke, T. Wood, *The Bloody Mohawk* (New York, NY: The MacMillan Company, 1940), 315.

<sup>38</sup>Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from its beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1774* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 353.

<sup>39</sup>Graymont, *Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 29-30.

<sup>40</sup>Jeffrey Amherst, "From Jeffrey Amherst to Sir William Johnson, March 16, 1760," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, vol. 4, 198.

<sup>41</sup>William Johnson, "Congress at Fort Stanwix Sept 15 – Oct 30, 1768," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, vol. 12, 623-624.

<sup>42</sup>William Johnson, "Journal of Indian Affairs Dec 9 – 12, 1758," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, Volume X, 75.

<sup>43</sup>Daniel Claus, "Anecdotes of the Mohawk Chief Captain Joseph Brant Alias Tayendanegea - 1778," in *Indian Affairs*, 317.

<sup>44</sup>Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: NY, Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 82.

<sup>45</sup>Extract of a Letter of Mr. Sam Kirtland Now at Boston, 22 August 1768, in Papers of Samuel Kirkland, Hamilton College, Hamilton, NY, 3b.

<sup>46</sup>Graymont, *Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 38.

<sup>47</sup>Letter of the Oneida Sachems to the Governor of New York, 31 December 1770, in Papers of Samuel Kirkland, Hamilton College, Hamilton, NY, 13b.

<sup>48</sup>A Copy of a Letter from the Chiefs of Oneida to Col Guy Johnson, Their Superintendent, 7 March 1775, in Papers of Samuel Kirkland, Hamilton College, Hamilton, NY, 54a.

<sup>49</sup>Graymont, *Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 38.

<sup>50</sup>William Johnson, "Niagara and Detroit Proceedings, July – September, 1761," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, vol. 4, 435.

<sup>51</sup>Richter, *Ordeal*, 81-84.

<sup>52</sup>William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York, Hill and Wang, 1983), 93-102.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>55</sup>William Johnson, "Journal of Indian Affairs, Meeting at Fort Johnson, March 1, 1761," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, vol. 10, 223-229.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup>Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 58-63.



- <sup>58</sup>Graymont, *Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 2-3.
- <sup>59</sup>William Johnson, "Letter to Thomas Gage, April 8, 1760," in *Sir William Johnson Papers*, vol. 4, 218.
- <sup>60</sup>Fischer, *Executed Failure*, 9.
- <sup>61</sup>Thomas S. Abler, *Chainbreaker*, 60-65.
- <sup>62</sup>Volkert P. Douw, "Indian Affairs Commissioners Meet with the Six Nations – May 2, 1776," in *Indian Affairs*, 42.
- <sup>63</sup>Williams, *Chainbreaker*, 73.
- <sup>64</sup>Fischer, *Executed Failure*, 25-26.
- <sup>65</sup>Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf Co., 1970), 139-141.
- <sup>66</sup>Fischer, *Executed Failure*, 4, 36-37.
- <sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 192-193.
- <sup>68</sup>Wallace, *Death and Rebirth*, 144.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

After 1763, the Iroquois Confederacy ceased to function as an autonomous organization. The decline in its independence, brought about by the increased influence of the European nations and their colonists, ultimately led to the dissolution of the League. This influence served as the significant reason for the break up of the Confederacy in 1777.

Prior to 1763, the Iroquois successfully protected themselves from their aggressive indigenous neighbors, which later led to their dominance over them. Prior to the Confederacy, the five separate nations fought each other and lost many wars against their powerful enemies, such as the Algonquians to the north.

Their supremacy came about from a primary centripetal force, the threats from their more powerful indigenous neighbors. Resulting from this threat, the five original tribes peacefully came together and established the Confederacy. Prior to 1763, the Confederacy held itself together through a powerful internal system. This system, based in its unique Iroquoian culture, included: leadership roles (i.e. balance of power); reciprocity; unanimity; and the adherence to their religious beliefs. Through this internal system of critical capabilities based in Iroquoian culture, the Iroquois possessed the resources to maintain a unity of command and effort required to defeat their native enemies. This internal system served also as a centripetal force that kept the League together.

However, this situation severely changed after the arrival of the Europeans. Even though they did not completely influence the Iroquois in the years following their arrival, their influence served to weaken the Confederacy's centripetal forces.

When the Europeans arrived in the northeastern part of North America, the Iroquois were engaged in a long standing battle against the Algonquians and its other neighbors. These wars initially brought in the involvement of two nations, France and the Netherlands. Their initial involvement arose out of diplomatic and economic interests. Due to their trade relationship and alliance with the Algonquians, the French entered the war against the Iroquois. With the assistance of the Dutch, the Iroquois received firearms in order to fight both the French and their native allies. The Dutch provided these weapons in exchange for the pelts the Iroquois brought with them for trade at Fort Orange.

The addition of these new weapons and metal tools only escalated the level of violence between the Iroquois and their enemies. These wars contributed to a great loss in lives on both sides. Along with the vicious fighting, plagues also contributed to the large number of Iroquois lost in the seventeenth century. These plagues came about from Iroquois contact with Europeans. The direct result from these losses came from the lack of bodily immunities to these diseases. During this century, the Iroquois lost approximately half of their population due to war and disease.

This rapid depopulation had a negative effect in the maintenance of Iroquoian culture. The first casualty centered on Iroquoian leadership. Of the three groups that ruled the Confederacy, the depopulation severely affected the hereditary sachem whose primary responsibility involved the preservation of the peace within the League. This

problem focused on the fact that the Iroquois could not find capable men within their families to fill these positions. The result from this lack of capable sachems threw off the balance with the other two groups (the clan matrons and the lesser chiefs). This loss of balance created a vacuum filled by the other two classes. As a result, these two groups exerted their own influence over both the tribes and the Confederacy. They also had their own separate agendas they could push more actively without the regulation of the sachems. By the middle 1700s, the Iroquois lacked a strong class of people that concentrated on the unity and peace within the Confederacy.

Through the loss of effective tribal elders, the Iroquois also started to experience a decline in the observance of some of their cultural institutions. The sachems had a responsibility to pass Iroquois religion, history, and lineage to the entire Confederacy during feasts and councils. When the sachems neglected this duty, many Iroquois lost an important connection to their past.

Besides the loss of these cultural aspects, the concept of reciprocity among the tribes lost its importance. As a concept, reciprocity acted as the glue that held the six nations together. In order for a tribe to maintain a good relationship with another tribe, it required constant communication by sending embassies and presents. This started to fail during the French and Indian War.

By the middle part of the eighteenth century, Europeans were encroaching on the boundaries of Iroquoia, increasing their influence on the Confederacy. The first effect felt included the loss of a wilderness barrier experienced by the majority of the League. Prior to the eighteenth century, the Mohawks constituted the only tribe of the Iroquois that did not have the benefit of a barrier between them and the whites. After this time many of the

Iroquois tribes had a permanent settlement (i.e. military or civilian) near their lands. As the Europeans established fortifications in their lands, for the purposes of defense and commerce, more tribes came under their influence. Settlers also moved closer to Iroquoia, primarily Mohawk and Oneida country, which provided the colonial governments a larger population of traders and representatives who understood the culture and language of the Iroquois. Another group to that increased in Iroquois country included the Protestant missionaries who ministered to the Mohawks, Oneidas, and Tuscaroras.

Due to their increased proximity to the Iroquois, the Europeans and the colonists directly influenced the decision making within the League. With the decline in the cultural institutions that kept the Iroquois in power over their indigenous enemies, the Iroquois had no response to the increased pressure placed on them. The Europeans and the colonists manifested this pressure through religion, commerce, political, and military presence.

With the loss of many competent sachems, the traditions of many of the Iroquois tribes lost importance. The only tribes that still maintained the majority of its traditions encompassed the western tribes, such as the Seneca. As the eastern tribes adopted Christianity, Protestant missionaries came to hold a tremendous sway over the separate tribes. Men like the Reverend Samuel Kirkland held much influence through his personal contact with the Oneidas and Tuscaroras. This loyalty played a critical factor in the Oneida and Tuscarora involvement on the American side during the Revolution.

During the fur trade, the colonial traders offered their goods, which made life easier, in exchange for pelts coveted in Europe. When the fur trade decline through the

severe de-population of fur bearing animals, the Iroquois still desired these goods. The problem became that of finding a substitute commodity for pelts. The land of the Iroquois became the new exchange good. Through a series of unfavorable deals with the colonial land speculators and settlers, the eastern tribes felt betrayed by their old allies. Of the eastern tribes, the Mohawks felt most betrayed by their support of the British against the French. The Mohawks also experienced a large population growth of colonists within their own lands where they had experienced a significant decline. By the late 1700s, the Mohawks ended up as the minority within their own lands.

In order to dissuade the situation, the British, through the Office of Indian Affairs, worked to establish a boundary between the Iroquois and the growing colonial population. The Proclamation of 1763 established this boundary line to separate the Indians and the colonists. Unfortunately the British did not possess the ability to enforce this boundary, which led Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1767. While this treaty served to establish a more definite boundary, it also opened up land in Iroquoia to more colonial settlers. The Mohawks lost much of their land and ended up surrounded by their new colonial neighbors. Many of the Iroquois sympathized for the plight of the Mohawks and realized the threat posed by the Americans.

During the American Revolution, the Six Nations experienced pressure from both sides to join either the British or Americans. When the two Iroquois factions sided with their white allies, the division grew. This brought up bad blood between the tribes. The first example occurred in 1777 at the Battle of Oriskany happened accidentally. Prior to the battle, the pro-British Seneca did not plan to fight because they considered themselves spectators to the British operation during the siege at Fort Stanwix. When the British

discovered the American plan to lift the siege, they went out to meet the militia. During the battle, Seneca ended up fighting against the American militia with its Oneida allies. The Seneca lost fourteen of their warriors, which spurred on subsequent violence with revenge as the motive. Following the war the majority of the pro-British Iroquois fled to Canada. This movement divided the Confederacy divided itself between two political boundaries of the United States and the British Dominion of Canada. The power and prestige of the Iroquois Confederacy vanished after the war due to this division.

Even though the Iroquois Confederacy grew into a strong political entity out of the threats by other more powerful tribes, they did not have the internal critical capabilities (i.e. cultural forces) to maintain their national identity upon the arrival of the Europeans. Through their contact, the Iroquois experienced a series of events, which contributed to the increase in centrifugal forces on the Confederacy. This increase led to the Confederacy's gradual decline in power and autonomy. This decline finally came to a head during the American Revolution when the League covered its fire at their capital at Onondaga for the last time in 1777. After the war the League effectively divided itself between two white states.

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